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Robert Harley
Earl of Oxford

E. S. Roscoe

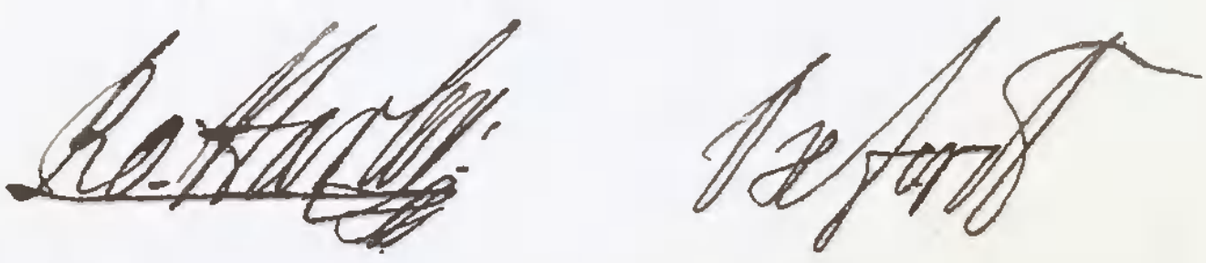
1902.

John W. Hales,
1905.

ROBERT HARLEY
EARL OF OXFORD

ROBERT HARLEY, EARL OF OXFORD AND EARL MORTIMER, K.G.

From a picture after Sir Godfrey Kneller in the National Portrait Gallery



ROBERT HARLEY
EARL OF OXFORD

PRIME MINISTER
1710–1714

A
STUDY OF POLITICS AND LETTERS
IN THE AGE OF ANNE

BY

E. S. ROSCOE

WITH THIRTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

HELEN CLERGUE

TO WHOM I AM INDEBTED FOR
VALUABLE AND ENCOURAGING ASSISTANCE
DURING THE PREPARATION OF THIS BOOK

PREFATORY NOTE

IT was the intention of Swift to write the life of Harley, and he asked the second Earl of Oxford to search among his father's papers for materials for this work. But the project remained unfulfilled, and from that day to this no biography of Robert Harley has been published; whatever opinion one may form of him either as a politician or a man, the absence of a separate story of his life is an inconvenience to the student of the age of Anne, on which, from the point of view of its relation to the evolution of English politics and literature, a good deal yet remains to be said. Fortunately, the materials for such a work have recently become more accessible, and it has been my endeavour to give from original sources, and in a short space, an unbiassed description of Harley's life, and at the same time to indicate the political influences which affected his career, and to sketch his relations with contemporary statesmen, and with the men of letters—more especially De Foe and Swift—by whom he was surrounded during his period of power.

The most important sources of information on

Harley's life are the manuscripts of the Duke of Portland, which are preserved at Welbeck Abbey, a large mass of which have lately been published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission. They are cited in this work as the *Harley Papers*, this being the sub-title which is given by the Commission to the volumes of the *Portland Papers* which contain this collection. In the following pages there are some passages from two articles in the *Edinburgh Review* of 1898 and 1901 on these papers, which, with other authorities, are more particularly described in Appendix III.

I have to thank Mr. Robert W. D. Harley of Brampton Bryan for the kind manner in which he placed his interesting collection of MSS. at my disposal; and the Duke of Portland and the Duke of Buccleuch for access to their MSS., which are not yet published. I am also under obligation to Mr. J. J. Cartwright of the Public Record Office, Secretary of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, for allowing me to see the proofs of the MSS. of the Marquis of Bath at Longleat, which will shortly form another volume of the publications of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. To Miss E. Bagnall I am indebted for the labour and time given to the preparation of the Index, and for assistance in the revision of the proofs.

E. S. R.

July 1902.

TABLE OF DATES

(*The dates in this volume are in all cases given in the New Style.*)

1661, 5th Dec. .	Robert Harley, born in Bow Street, London.
1682, 18th Mar. .	Admitted a student of the Inner Temple (but was never called to the Bar).
1685	Married to Elizabeth Foley.
1689	M.P. for Tregony.
1690	M.P. for New Radnor.
1690	Commissioner of Public Accounts.
1691	Death of his first wife.
1701	Act of Settlement.
1701, 10th Feb. .	Speaker of House of Commons.
1701, 7th Sept. .	Triple Alliance between England, Holland, and the Emperor, against France.
1702, 8th Mar. .	Death of William III. and Accession of Anne.
1703, Nov. . . .	De Foe released from prison by good offices of Harley, and connection between Harley and De Foe commenced.
1704, 16th May .	Appointed Secretary of State (retaining office of Speaker).
1704, Oct. . . .	Harley married Sarah Middleton
1704, 13th Aug. .	Battle of Blenheim
1705, 5th April .	Ceased to be Speaker on dissolution of Parliament.
1706, 22nd July .	Articles of Union between England and Scotland signed in London.
1707, 6th Mar. .	Act of Union received the Royal assent.
1708, 11th Feb. .	Harley resigned Secretaryship of State.
1710, 8th Aug.. .	Godolphin dismissed from office of Lord High Treasurer.

1710, 9th Aug.	Harley appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer.
1710, 4th Oct.	Swift introduced to Harley.
1711, 23rd May	Harley created Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer.
1711, 29th May	Appointed Lord High Treasurer.
1711, 31st Dec.	Dismissal of Marlborough from his official places.
1713, 31st Mar.	Peace of Utrecht.
1714, 6th June	Schism Bill received Royal assent.
1714, 27th July	Harley is dismissed from office of Lord High Treasurer.
1714, 1st Aug.	Death of Anne and Accession of George I.
1715, 10th June	Motion for impeachment of Harley for high treason.
1715, 12th July	Harley committed to the Tower.
1717, 3rd July	Released from the Tower on failure of prosecution.
1719, 28th Feb.	Proceedings begun for introduction of Peerage Bill.
1724, 21st May	Death of Harley in London.

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"Ce siècle a engendré le nôtre. Toutes nos origines et tous nos caractères sont en lui: l'age moderne est sorti de lui et date de lui."

E. AND J. DE GONCOURT.

ROBERT HARLEY
EARL OF OXFORD

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

1661–1700

HARLEY'S CHARACTER IN HISTORY — THE HARLEYS OF BRAMPTON BRYAN — SIR ROBERT HARLEY — BRILLIANA LADY HARLEY — SIR EDWARD HARLEY — ROBERT HARLEY'S EARLY LIFE — FIRST MARRIAGE — MEMBER FOR TREGONY — MEMBER FOR NEW RADNOR — WORK IN PARLIAMENT — BILL FOR TRIENNIAL PARLIAMENTS — OPPOSES A LARGE STANDING ARMY — NATIONAL COMMERCIAL EXPANSION — ACT TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL LAND BANK — HARLEY'S POLITICAL POSITION — HIS CHARACTER IN EARLY MANHOOD — FRIENDSHIP WITH CHARLES MONTAGUE.

"WE fight with the poison of the tongue, with words that speak like the piercing of a sword, with the gall of envie, the venom of slander, the foam of malice." Such were the words in which De Foe, the acutest observer of the men and manners of his age, described the characteristics of the political life in which Robert Harley, for a quarter of a century, took so conspicuous a part. It need not therefore surprise us that it has been difficult to form a sure opinion of his political actions, though at the same time his career has not

always been considered either with sufficient care or without prejudice. Who does not remember Macaulay's brilliant and misleading description of him? Not even damning with faint praise, the historian describes him as one whose intellect "was small and slow," and who was eventually found by his contemporaries to be "really a dull and puzzle-headed man."[1] Bolingbroke, twelve years after Harley had been in his grave, assailed his memory with virulence, forgetful that in former years he had spoken of him with respect and admiration, and sometimes even with affection.[2] The truth is that Harley's character has too frequently been drawn from the fragmentary allusions of contemporary writers, often time-servers, or political enemies who varied their praise or blame according to the exigencies of the moment. Such sources of information in such an age as that of Anne require even more careful investigation than at any period of our history. "If an Englishman," wrote Addison with remarkable detachment of mind, "considers the great ferment into which our political world is thrown at present, and how intensely it is heated in all its parts, he cannot

[1] A more judicial view of Harley is taken in a valuable paper, "The Development of Political Parties during the Reign of Queen Anne," by Walter Frewen Lord, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. xiv., new series.

[2] "Adieu, dear master; no man loves you more entirely than Harry."—St. John to Harley, 15th May 1705, *Harley Papers*, ii. 180.

suppose it will cool again in less than three hundred years. In such a tract of time it is possible that the heats of the present age may be extinguished, and our several classes of great men represented under their proper characters." Addison perceived that the condition of England at the beginning of the eighteenth century was remarkable and exceptional: the nation was still acutely sensitive after repeated and extraordinary constitutional crises, after the bitter conflicts of the preceding half-century between Churchmen and Nonconformists. New conditions—political, commercial, and social—were coming into existence, of which the men who were taking part in the national evolution were wholly inappreciative. By a study of Harley's career, the centre as it was of the political life of his age, by discarding many personal and encumbering details, we are better able to estimate the real forces which were at work beneath a mass of intrigue and invective, of suspicion and fear.

If Harley's capacity has been unduly depreciated by some historians, it would, on the other hand, be wrong to rank him as a statesman either of large intellect or of conspicuous strength of character. He was not a Chatham, a Pitt, or a Fox; he was not even a Walpole: but there is this solid fact, which is worth more than praise or depreciation, that when many able and brilliant

persons were engaged in public life, he succeeded by his individual capacity in attaining to the highest place, whilst for years before he became Prime Minister he was regarded with respect and often with admiration by those who were the best able to appreciate political merit. A tiresome manner, an almost wearisome knowledge of parliamentary forms and history, involved speech, all tending, it has been said, to hide the deficiencies of his mind and to impose upon his hearers, will not permit a politician without remarkable capacity to reach the place which Harley attained.

Harley's life as a whole, especially his birth, his family, and his character, have not been sufficently considered; isolated facts have been dwelt on so as to give them undue importance, and his career has been generally surveyed from the point of view of other times, detached from its political atmosphere. His actions have been tested by a different standard from that which prevailed in his own time, when duplicity was regarded as statesmanship, and when De Foe could assert as necessary what he calls "that old maxim of Politicks" that "men might be made use of when they can serve us, without any real design to serve them"; in other words, that deception was admirable. Statements cannot be too carefully received if made when truth is at a discount, and when exaggerated eulogy is considered as little more than common courtesy. We

sometimes forget that the fine lines which have impressed succeeding generations with Pope's high estimate of Harley, were prefixed to an edition of the works of Parnell, and were a dedication by which Pope hoped to please a nobleman whose recommendation, though his political influence had departed, was still invaluable to an author.

But the time has come when some attempt may be made to describe without prejudice the most noticeable features in the career of a statesman who played a great part in his day, and who is an interesting study; for he is the most modern of the politicians of the age of Anne, an age which in politics, letters, and commerce was the beginning of our own. Though he had neither the ability of some of his contemporaries, nor the resolute will of others, not one of them had anything like the same capacity as a parliamentary leader, or the same sensitive perception of public opinion. Harley is the typical parliamentary statesman born an age too soon, living in years which formed part of a period of transition, both social and political, and which was also marked by features of the most remarkable and serious character—a great European war, and some uncertainty as to the succession to the throne of England.

To his ancestors and his family, Robert Harley owed some of his success, and their influence was lifelong. Then, as now, important family connec-

tions made the first steps of a political career more easy for a beginner,—they could open the way to fortune though they could not assure it,—and in Harley's case, the effects of early training and association were clearly apparent at a late stage of public life.

Robert Harley came of an old Herefordshire family. Originally the Harleys lived in Shropshire, but in the reign of Henry III. they became —by the marriage of Robert de Harley with Margaret de Brampton — the possessors of Brampton Castle[1] and with it of a considerable estate at Brampton Bryan, in that agreeable broken country which lies on the Welsh border, between the Clun Hills and the larger valleys, and spreading pastures, which extend from Leominster to the Severn. Somewhat remote, it has many pleasant characteristics: hills and hanging woods, small rivers, and villages of thatched cottages with picturesque black and white walls, numerous apple orchards, and grey church towers, give the landscape pleasing variety. In mediæval times the castle and the church stood side by side, almost surrounded by the village; a park studded with well-grown oaks stretched—as it does to-day—up the hillside to the west, and pastures sloped from the castle walls to the willows by the Teme. In 1644 both

[1] *The Castles of Herefordshire.* By the Rev. C. J. Robinson, p. 8.

RUINS OF BRAMPTON CASTLE, HEREFORDSHIRE

castle and church were reduced to ruins by the Royalists under Sir Michael Woodhouse, but in 1661–62 Sir Edward Harley rebuilt the church, and erected the existing house close to the castle, which, unroofed and ivy-clad, to-day rises picturesque and peaceful from the lawn.

Both Robert Harley's father and grandfather were public-spirited and high-minded men, both were members of Parliament possessing an influence which extended beyond the bounds of their county. His grandfather, Sir Robert,[1] was a man of ability and learning, numbering among his friends Dr. Donne, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and George Herbert; one of the Puritanical left wing of the Church of England, he was intolerant in his religious opinions, and was an influential member of the Parliamentary party until his death.

Sir Robert Harley showed his zeal for Puritanism not only as a stout soldier, but as a narrow-minded iconoclast. Chairman of the Commons Committee which was appointed in 1644 with instructions to destroy superstitious and idolatrous relics, from April of that year to the following August he was active in the destruction of monuments, stained glass, and everything in the nature of artistic or architectural adornment at Westminster Abbey, St. Margaret's Church, and the chapels at Whitehall and Hampton

[1] 1579–1656.

Court; and Canterbury Cathedral suffered from his misguided zeal.[1]

Thrice married, his last wife was Brilliana Conway, one who in those stirring times made her name famous—she was courageous, sagacious, and lovable. Her letters, long preserved at Eywood,[2] were published by the Camden Society in 1853, and give posterity an insight into her character, and, with those which have remained among the archives at Welbeck, present a complete picture of a most admirable woman. She was born in 1600 and married in 1623. As in the instance of her memorable contemporary, Mary, Lady Verney, the trials of the times prematurely ended her life. Left in 1643 in charge of her husband's house, and entrusted with the management of his business, Lady Harley took up her task cheerfully and bravely. "Since you think Brampton a safe place for me," she wrote to him on the 15th of July, "I will think so too, and should not for anything do that which would make the world believe our hope did begin to fail in our God. But be pleased to send me directions what I should do if there should be any stir."[3] And

[1] The following is one among many similar entries: "1645. May 13. Receipt by Thomas Stevens of 26s. from Sir Robert Harley for defacing pictures on the N. side of the Abbey."—*Harley Papers*, i. 133.

[2] Now in the possession of R. W. D. Harley, Esq., of Brampton Bryan.

[3] *Harley Papers*, i. 91.

BRILLIANA LADY HARLEY

From a portrait in the possession of R. W. P. Harley, Esq., at Brampton Bryan, Herefordshire

stir there was, for in the autumn Brampton was besieged by a body of the Royalist party under Sir William Vavasour. It was an age of heroines, and Brilliana Lady Harley showed no less courage at Brampton Bryan than did the more famous Lady Derby at Lathom House, and the beautiful Lady Blanche Arundel at Wardour Castle. For six weeks she defended her home with resolution and spirit. In October she wrote to her husband: "All the children are well, but I have taken an exceeding great cold, which much troubles me. I beseech the Lord to preserve you and to give you a comfortable meeting with your most affectionate wife." But this was not to be, for in the same month Lady Harley died, worn out by the fatigues and anxieties of the preceding weeks.

Sir Edward Harley,[1] who was made a Knight of the Bath in 1667, was as public-spirited as his father, but more moderate and more statesmanlike in opinion. Though he fought in the Parliamentary armies with great gallantry, he was opposed to a strong anti-Monarchical policy, and, after the death of the King, to the assumption by Cromwell of almost autocratic power; and, like others who had served the cause of Parliament well, he lost in time the confidence of the Protector. It was natural, therefore, that he should be in favour of the return of Charles II.; but though a member of

[1] 1624–1700.

Parliament during the reign of that King and of James II., he held himself aloof from party struggles. He was heartily an adherent of William of Orange, and after the Revolution was always ready in Parliament to support all reasonable measures.

He died in 1700 at his Herefordshire home. "He had," wrote his second son, Auditor Harley, "all the accomplishments of a gentleman. His features were very exact, and he had great quickness in his eyes, which commanded respect. His temper was naturally very passionate, though mixed with the greatest tenderness and humanity. His passion he kept under strict restraint, and had a manner totally subdued, but his generosity and tender compassion to all objects of charity continued to the last."

From these staunch upholders of popular rights and religious freedom—a strange origin for the future Tory Prime Minister — Robert Harley sprang. He was Sir Edward's eldest son by his second marriage, his mother being Abigail Stephens, daughter of Nathaniel Stephens of Essington in Gloucestershire, and he was born in 1661. When quite young he left his pleasant home, for in August 1671 he went to the school of a Mr. Birch at Shilton in Oxfordshire, where among his schoolfellows was his future colleague Harcourt. On the 28th of that month he sent his first letter home. Robert Harley, imbued with ancestral Puritanism,

wrote—probably under the eye of his master—in a more formal style than the schoolboy of to-day.

"1671, August 28th, Shilton. Please to accept my most humble duty to you and my Lady Mother in this line from a learner. I hope through the grace of God, with your blessings and prayers, which I earnestly beg, my endeavours may in time send you fairer fruits than these first beginnings."[1]

It has been sometimes supposed that Harley was educated at Westminster School, but of this there is no evidence. In 1677 he was still at Shilton, for he writes in that year particulars of an illness from which he had been suffering there; and in the next spring there is a letter from his father to him at the same place. In June 1678, Sir Edward, writing to Lady Harley from Westminster, where he was staying, remarks at the end of his letter, "Bull and Robin are well," showing that young Harley was in London with him, but not, it would seem, at Westminster School. In the following July he was at Shilton, and his father not only writes to him there, but adds, in the manner of a parent to a son at school or college, "Study the Greek lexicon and Erasmus's adages." About this time Sir Edward seems to have thought of sending his son to Oxford, for in October he writes, "Acquaint Mr. Birch that it will not now

[1] *Harley Papers*, i. 324. Endorsed "First letter."

be needful to provide you a lodging at Oxford. I have altered my thoughts thereon."[1] Harley therefore must have remained at Shilton for the whole period of his early youth. But in 1680 the time had come for him to go to some more advanced place of education, and one was selected in London. We are told that too great stress is set in the present day on physical exercises, but when Sir Edward Harley recommends M. Foubert's house to his wife, he dwells as much on the training of his son's body as of his mind—

"(16)80, July 6th. Monsieur Foubert, who for his religion was driven out of France, has set up an Academy near the Haymarket for riding, fencing, dancing, handling arms, and mathematics. He is greatly commended, and has divers persons of quality. I was with him and like him very well, so that if you dislike not I would have Robin spend some time there."[2]

At this school, if such it can be called, Robert Harley remained until December 1682.

For the next few years little can now be discovered of his life. In 1684 he was living in London, and in letters from his parents he is asked to undertake various small pieces of business for them: "I desire some good wine," writes his father. "You know what I like—neither hot, sharp, nor

[1] *Harley Papers*, i. 361.

[2] *Harley Papers*, i. 366.

sweet; some Canary requisite for friends. If you could find a right sort of white wine, neither 'eager nor stummed,' it would do well."

In May 1685, Harley married Elizabeth Foley, the daughter of a Tory magnate, Thomas Foley of Whitley Court, Worcestershire. Always delicate, she was a victim in 1691 of that scourge of the age, smallpox. But in 1694 he married again,[1] forming a very different alliance, for his second wife was Sarah Middleton, daughter of Simon Middleton, a merchant of London. In a letter to his father in the very year of his first marriage, Harley remarked that the doctor had prescribed his wife a course of physic for six weeks, and then he quaintly added, "I find myself well, but weak, especially my eyes. Many advise the cutting off of my hair, but I hope it will wear off without that."[2]

Harley, during the next four years, lived sometimes in London, sometimes in Herefordshire, taking, as became his father's son, an important share in local affairs, and qualifying himself for a wider field of activity by intercourse with politicians in town. At length, in 1689, his parliamentary career began by his election in the first Parliament of William and Mary for the borough of Tregony, one of those numerous little Cornish constituencies which were usually filled by court placemen.

[1] *Harley Papers*, i. 552, 557. See *post*, p. 199.
[2] *Harley Papers*, i. 389.

The new member was in full sympathy with the principles of the Revolution; and if it be allowable to call him a party man at all, at that time he must be regarded as a Whig. But the fundamental differences which were presently to divide the country and Parliament had not yet arisen, and it was as a friend of civil and religious liberty, and as an adherent of the new dynasty, that Harley entered Parliament. He did not, however, long remain a member for the little Cornish borough with its hundred and fifty obedient electors, for when in the following year the general election occurred, he contested the borough of New Radnor. At first unsuccessful, he was ultimately, after the hearing of a petition in November, given the seat by a Committee of the House of Commons.

During the next ten years Harley's political influence steadily increased; and he soon gained a great parliamentary reputation, less by the display of striking powers than by sound sense, and by a close attention to, and unusual study of, the forms and the business of the House of Commons. "I have often heard it said, though he had but £500 a year, he spent half of it on clerks to copy out what papers were given into the House of Commons concerning treaties, etc., so that Mr. Blathwaite and others of the King's people were almost afraid to speak before him."[1]

[1] *Wentworth Papers*, edited by Cartwright, p. 134.

In 1690, Harley became a Commissioner for Public Accounts, in the following year he "was put into the chair of the Committee for examining the estimates of the Fleet." A single paragraph from a letter of Edward Harley to his father shows very clearly the estimation in which his brother Robert was held at this time. "The favour and acceptance that the goodness of God has given my brother in the House of Commons is extraordinary and much taken notice of."[1]

At the height of his power Harley was essentially a man of social and kindly instincts; nothing pleased him better than to receive Swift or Prior without ceremony, and to drink a bottle of claret with them. The same characteristic is found in his life at this time, perhaps touched with the unrestrainedness of youth, which on one occasion led to a parental remonstrance, quaint to modern ideas when we remember that Harley was already a capable member of Parliament. To it this letter is an answer; its language may seem too scriptural, but it was composed in a style which would be pleasing to Sir Edward Harley, who had for years been one of the Parliamentary and Nonconformist party. It reveals a glimpse of Harley's personal life at this time.

"The paper received last night could not but occasion great thoughts of heart, though in the great

[1] *Harley Papers*, i. 487.

commotion and distraction by the multiplicity of business hath been my lot this day, may be less fit so fully to express myself as this great occasion requires, yet deem it absolutely due to the duty owing a father endeared by innumerable tokens of affection, and to what is dearest to a man and a Christian, to give the soonest answer which, God willing, shall be enlarged.

"In the first place, I desire to look up to Heaven, without the permission of which neither a hair falls to the ground nor a cubit taken from our reputation, and I doe most humbly and syncerely bend my knees to the Father of mercies, imploring his mercie and grace, that this rebuke may bring forth in my soul a joyful harvest of humble, strict walking, with al circumspect holyness, in faith and obedience. As to the matter charged, I beg leave to say with syncerity and singleness of heart, I trust I have that in me that I dare confess my faults, rather by much than add to them by the covering of a lye. I can most solemly declare I have not been in any public-house—except just the time of dining—since I came out of the country. I have so absolutely withdrawn myself from al acquaintance, that I have spent al the time hath not been taken up in my public and privat affairs with one person only at the Temple, whom I have—for divers reasons—constantly attended in the evening.

"It is possible from many shots of the like nature, I could easily guess the bow whence this

poysoned arrow was shot; but I desire to look higher, that it may be admonition to more heavenly mindedness and humility, for which I humbly beg the concurrence of your prayers, and that you wil please to permit me to interpret this holy jelosie of yours over me an additional mark of your most tender affection to him who with al humility and obedience beseeches your blessing."[1]

Two measures during the last years of the seventeenth century chiefly engrossed the attention of Parliament and the country—the Triennial Bill,[2] as it was popularly called, and the reduction of the standing army. Each was distasteful to the King, and each, as was to be expected, was supported by Harley. Triennial Parliaments had been brought into existence by the Long Parliament in 1641, and they had been destroyed by the Tories after the Restoration. All the influences arising from family, early training, and temperament, caused Harley to be in favour of a measure which might be regarded as completing the constitutional changes produced by the Great Rebellion.

The first Bill which was introduced in 1693 passed both Houses, and after some hesitation was vetoed by the King. It had a curious parliament-

[1] *Harley Papers*, i. 467.

[2] More strictly—a Bill for the more frequent meeting and calling of Parliament.

ary history. Early in the following session, in November, it was again introduced, and was then thrown out by the Commons;[1] but in December a new Bill was passed by the Lords and rejected by the Commons.[2] It was supported effectively by Harley: "In the great debate of yesterday about the triennial parliaments, the Lord was pleased to enable your brother to speak so that some in the House called upon me to bless God that vouchsafed to give me a son so to speak, and also the mercy to me to hear him."[3]

The Harleys in each generation were an affectionate and united family, and it is in these touching words that Sir Edward writes of his son's parliamentary merits.

The session was long and did not end until the 25th of April 1694, but the first business of the House of Commons when Parliament again met in November was to order Harley to prepare and bring in yet another Bill. It was suggested that the assent to the measure by the King was the price of supply. Be that as it may, it passed through all its stages without opposition, and received the royal assent.[4]

Macaulay has asserted that Harley liked to thwart the King, and that in order to do so he was ready to act with either of the two parties in the

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, v. 788. [2] *Parl. Hist.*, v. 822, 826.
[3] *Harley Papers*, i. 548. *Parl. Hist.*, v. 759.
[4] *Parl. Hist.*, v. 860, 861.

State. But in opposing William and his Whig Ministry in 1697 after the Peace of Ryswyck in regard to a standing army, Harley acted with perfect consistency, and the position which he maintained was moderate and statesmanlike. For once, at any rate, the middle course so dear to him was the right course; whether he looked on a standing army as a menace to civil liberty, or whether —and this seems the chief reason for his action—he objected to it in the interests of national economy, does not much matter. He perceived the danger of extreme action whether by the Court or its opponents. "The prospect is very cloudy," he writes to his father on 23rd November 1697, "every one is full of the common topic—a standing army—and it is talked with heat on both sides." A week later he says, "The argument against a standing army has raised a great heat in the town. There is very little prospect of moderate councils." And on the 30th he observes, "The heat against an army rather increases than otherwise, so that it is thought necessary to disband the four French [Dutch?] regiments which were to be kept."[1] It was an occasion when a politician always favourable to moderate counsels, economical in his financial views, and imbued with much common sense, could make his influence felt. The King, who as a foreigner could not possibly understand the

[1] *Harley Papers*, i. 593.

state of English feeling, regarded the question from a purely military point of view, one not confined to the defence of England, but embracing possible continental campaigns. Harley, while in touch with the feeling of the country and of Parliament, was also perceptive of the reasonableness to some extent of the King's motives, and yet sympathised with those who urged the danger of a standing army on historical and theoretical grounds. The details of the parliamentary measures of 1697 and 1698 have long since ceased to be of practical importance, but in the contest between the King and his Parliament we perceive the ground-swell of the storms of the Rebellion and of the Commonwealth, the dread of absolutism and of militarism — for men still remembered both the pretensions of Charles I. and the rule of the Major-Generals—struggling with the needs of a changing state of society, in which a standing army as much as parliamentary parties was becoming a necessary feature of the English polity. We perceive, too, the remarkable influence of Harley, at once commanding and moderating. Not objecting to a standing army on principle, he moved in December 1697 that the number of troops should be the same as in 1680. The indefiniteness of this arrangement produced fresh difficulties, and it was not until the following January, after an attempt had been made by the King's friends to rescind Harley's resolution, that by arrangement between

Ministers and the House of Commons the number was fixed at 10,000 men. To support this army Montague desired a vote for £400,000, but Harley would have limited it to £300,000. The House, with that sense of compromise so strongly marked in English assemblies, split the difference.

But in December 1698 the parliamentary contest was bitterly renewed, for the new Parliament was more hostile to a standing army than that which had been lately dissolved. The King's Ministers, unwilling to face the storm, left the initiative to the House, and under the tactful leadership of Harley the army was fixed at 7000 natural born Englishmen (January 1699). Had Parliament followed its own inclination, the army would have been entirely disbanded; it was Harley's parliamentary management that built the golden bridge over which the King could—however unwillingly—pass, and who not only resolved a difficult and a dangerous crisis, but established a parliamentary and a constitutional basis for the system of a standing army. "My brother's conduct in this affair," wrote Edward Harley to his father, "is very much commended"; and a little later, "The difficulties concerning disbanding the army seem to be over. It is no small cause of thankfulness that a dear relation is so eminently useful and has his health so well."[1]

[1] *Harley Papers*, i. 600, 601.

At the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries the commercial expansion of England was beginning. It was an immense national impulse striving for outlets; among other forces, internal peace, a growing population, and individual liberty all tended to turn the energies of the English people towards the making of money and the utilisation of capital, and in its modern form of joint stock enterprise this new vitality was already conspicuous. Yet at the same time men were loath to act without the assistance and the favour of the Crown. Some of the new undertakings—such as the Hudson Bay Company, which had been incorporated by Royal Charter—had been successful. The Bank of England had been established by Montague and the Whigs in 1694, largely in the interest of the merchants of London, who were identified with the Whig party, and its creation, in spite of early difficulties, was already seen to be of national importance. Harley, watchful of the movements of the public mind, and appreciative of the advantage to the mercantile community of the Bank of England, became responsible for another financial scheme, which he expected would supply the Government with money and benefit the landowners, of whom he was a representative. The antagonism of town and country, which was accentuated by the fact that these localities were

in some degree marked by religious as well as by political differences, thus, under the influence of modern national development, took a new form. The originator of the plan was Dr. Hugh Chamberlen, one of those charlatans who sometimes are able to impose even on sensible men. This medical practitioner had before 1696 persistently advertised his scheme of a Land Bank, and a Committee of the House of Commons had, in 1693, pronounced it to be practicable. In February 1696 the House of Commons passed a resolution that money should be raised by this means, and Harley thereupon carried through Parliament a Bill[1] which, among other financial details, created what was to be called a National Land Bank. Two and a half millions were to be raised by public subscription, the loan bearing interest at the rate of 7 per cent., which was to be paid from the proceeds of a special Salt Tax, and the subscribers were to be incorporated as the Governor and Company of the National Land Bank. Half a million was to be advanced to landowners on mortgage at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest, and the Bank was empowered to issue notes. To gratify the landowners and the Tories, no person interested in the Bank of England was to have any share or lot in the new undertaking. The idea was attractive to a Government which was

[1] 7 & 8 Will. III. c. 31.

hard pressed for money; it pleased the country party, and it appeared likely to give to it the same credit which the Bank of England had given to its opponents. Fortunately, a scheme which would assuredly have ruined all connected with it, from the first found no popular support, the people showing more sagacity than Parliament. Scarcely a penny was raised, much to the chagrin of its promoters, who forgot that by excepting from any participation in it those who were connected with the Bank of England, they were eliminating most men of business, and that neither for loan nor notes was there any sufficient or realisable security.[1] Failure, however, though this scheme was, its legislative inception throws light both on Harley's character and career, since we see him carrying a financial measure which, unsound though it may have been, was at the time regarded as of the first importance by large numbers of his contemporaries, and was undoubtedly an ingenious attempt to utilise growing commercial tendencies for the needs of a political party.

In a parliamentary sense Harley had now, and at an early age, attained a position which was certain to lead sooner or later to office. Hitherto, in the first stage of his life, he had been eminently successful. He was presently to pass on to a

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, v. pp. 994, 1156. Rogers, *First Nine Years of the Bank of England*, p. 50 *et seq.*

stormier sea, where more commanding qualities than he had yet been called upon to show were essential for a statesman. Up to this point he had been in a state of comparative political freedom; he was as yet unbound by troublesome party ties, his action was still unfettered by the necessity of aiming at definite political objects, and of considering personal idiosyncrasies either of colleagues or of his sovereign. His keen perception of political currents, his common sense, his dislike of extreme courses, had hitherto been actually advantageous to him, though in later years these same qualities tended to his weakness.

The first period of Harley's life, as we have seen, ends with the century. Hitherto he has been steadily pursuing a parliamentary career, and he has been noticeable as one of an active, intelligent, and influential family, keenly interested both in the affairs of the nation and of his country, one of a family group, with each member of which he was and always remained on friendly and affectionate terms, and every one of whom always delighted in his successes and sympathised with him in his trials. Up to this date his father and his brother Edward,[1] who in a useful public life

[1] Edward Harley, 1664–1735, a member of the Middle Temple, M.P. for Leominster 1698–1722. In 1702 he was appointed Auditor of the Imprest for life. He wrote some works on religious subjects, and took an active and practical interest in charitable schemes both in London and in Herefordshire.

well sustained the traditions of the family, are more clearly defined characters than Robert Harley; for even in those early years he was reserved, careful in his expressions of opinion, but popular for his moderation and for a kindly manner which he never lost, since it was the outcome of a kind heart. Often, indeed, in later life his good nature was turned by his enemies to his disadvantage. It was his habit to promise where he could not perform, to speak smoothly to hide his intentions; such were the things said against him, not always without foundation. But sometimes a desire to oblige, and a dislike to refuse in the one case, and a wish not to hurt by harsh words and a curt manner in the other, became to prejudiced persons evidence of insincerity and cunning.

In those days, too, there must have been much that was agreeable in his character, since there had grown up a close friendship between himself and Charles Montague.[1] They were of the same

[1] Charles Montague (1661–1715), created Baron Halifax in 1700, and raised to an earldom in 1714. In 1687, in collaboration with Prior, he wrote a burlesque of Dryden's "Hind and Panther." In 1689 he was elected to the Convention Parliament, and in 1692 became a Lord of the Treasury. In 1694 he carried a Bill which created the Bank of England, and in the same year was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 1697 Montague became First Lord of the Treasury in place of Godolphin. In 1699 his great influence in the House of Commons began to decline, and he resigned his offices on being created a peer. Henceforth he continued to take a leading part in English politics — becoming First Lord of the Treasury in 1714 for the second time, acting consistently with the Whig party.

S.r ROBERT HARLEY Knight of the Bath
of Brampton Bryan Castle in the County of Hereford

age, and Montague had already won a conspicuous parliamentary position by his brilliant talents, and by his remarkable financial ability. But the ease and courtesy of Harley's manner, and a temper rarely ruffled, concealed a mind watchful and resourceful, ever active in schemes to effectuate its aims, until, somewhat after middle age, a career which had been one of continuous work and of constant anxiety, and the lassitude which comes from health, lessened his mental vigour. His father and brother were of a franker and more open nature, and were sometimes unable to understand a character and a capacity which were gradually giving him a political position scarcely realised by his relatives.

CHAPTER II

SPEAKER AND SECRETARY OF STATE

1701–1705

HARLEY ELECTED SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES—ENGLAND AND FRANCE—HARLEY AGAIN ELECTED SPEAKER IN LAST PARLIAMENT OF WILLIAM III.—ACCESSION OF ANNE—DECLARATION OF WAR WITH FRANCE—HARLEY SPEAKER IN PARLIAMENT OF 1702—EFFECT OF THE WAR ON DOMESTIC POLITICS—SECRETARY OF STATE—OCCASIONAL CONFORMITY BILL—HARLEY'S MANAGEMENT OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—HIS POLITICAL POSITION—HARLEY AND GODOLPHIN.

THE second period of Harley's life begins with the year 1701, when on 10th February he was elected Speaker in the fourth Parliament of William III.[1] The office had in the first instance been offered to the veteran Tory leader, Sir Edward Seymour; but the very day he declined it, Godolphin nominated Harley.[2] By his opposition, temperate though it was, to the proposals of the King in regard to a standing army in the previous Parliament, Harley had gained favour with the Tories, while his knowledge of parliamentary business, his family con-

[1] His opponent was Sir Thomas Onslow, who was defeated by one hundred and twenty votes.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. v. p. 1232.

[2] *Harley Papers*, ii. 14.

nections, and his admitted moderation of opinion, caused his candidature to be regarded favourably in nearly every part of the House. Evelyn notes the fact in a suggestive sentence: "The old Speaker laid aside, and Mr. Harley, an able gentleman, chosen." In the words of an impartial and experienced observer, we have the best indication of the real opinion of Harley among those who were not political partisans, and the best evidence of the influential position to which he had already risen.

The evolution of two well-defined parliamentary and political parties out of two radical and national divisions was now in progress. To the one belonged the clergy of the Established Church, the majority of landowners and country gentry, and many of the peers; to the other the Nonconformists and the inhabitants of the towns, whether engaged in commerce or professions. The first, which was once the Royalist party, acquiesced—many of them reluctantly—in the Revolution; the other assisted and welcomed it, but in order to complete it had to support the foreign policy of William III. The Whigs thus became the War party. The death of the King (8th March 1702), however, removed a strong individual force from the conduct of public affairs, while the fact that his successor was a woman increased the influence of the change, hastening the transference of the executive power

from the Sovereign to a select body of the chief politicians who were becoming the Cabinet. Greater responsibility was thrown on leading statesmen, who were necessarily obliged to seek support from their adherents in the country and from the representatives of it in Parliament. Thus from the beginning of the eighteenth century the two political bodies became more compact, the members in Parliament less individual, and more organised in a course of continuous political action session by session. In other words, a purely dual party system was in process of formation, definite though imperfect, not easy to reckon with but often of remarkable force. Religious freedom and toleration were the basis of the Whig party, as support of the Church of England and of clericalism was that of the Tories; again, the right of the people to choose their own sovereign underlay Whig principles, as the divine right of kings was believed in by many Tories. But in no other respect were the characteristics of the two parties, which are so conspicuous later in the eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries, then visible. The Whigs in the reign of William III. were the Court party, as the Tories were in that of Anne and of George III.; but on the other hand, the Whigs were throughout the reign of Anne the War party, as the Tories were the Peace party. The Whigs found most support in the towns, and the Tories in the country; but

though the difference gradually tended to the liberalism of the one and the conservatism of the other, it did not in the age of Anne affect their action in regard to social or commercial questions. There was, in fact, except as to religious toleration, little to remind us of the parties of a later time. The favour with which the Whigs regarded the Hanoverian succession, and the sympathy of the Tories, though not universally—since the Whimsical or Hanoverian Tories are constantly in evidence—for the Pretender, were the result of a past national struggle, and were abnormal features of party distinctions, though, as Harley's life markedly exemplifies, they were invaluable for the purposes of political warfare. While, therefore, it is convenient in the age of Anne to designate the two adverse parties by names which have grown familiar, and which even then had sufficient signification, we must be careful to realise that they had not the exact meaning of more modern times. Nor should the posthumous influence on English parties of William III., and of his policy, the basis of which was an Anglo-Dutch alliance against France, be overlooked. The Dutch, too, were Protestants, with whom the Dissenters were in sympathy, and the French Protestant *emigrés* were active members of the Whig party, antagonistic to the existing government in France. On the other hand, the preference of the Church

of England and of many of the Tories was for a friendship with France, where the divine right of kings still flourished. Sentiment plays a larger part in international affairs than statesmen are willing to admit, and it had a considerable effect in shaping the views of the two great English parties upon foreign affairs during the reign of Anne. For from 1710 the peace policy of Harley's ministry was adhered to not only because the people desired the cessation of the war, but because it was a French and therefore a Tory policy. Friendship for France, as much as its benefit to England, was the basis of Bolingbroke's commercial treaty, and friendship for Holland—the direct legacy of William—was in a measure a cause of the virulent opposition of the Whigs to the Treaty of Utrecht, and especially to the negotiations which preceded it.

The action of parties was frequently uncertain, and was complicated by the sovereign's considerable personal influence; but it reflected and was influenced by the opinion of the constituencies, undemocratic though they were, which in their turn were addressed by writers on behalf of the party leaders, who were the forerunners of the modern party journalists, and of whose increasing influence no one was so perceptive or appreciative as Harley.

At the moment of its election in the first year of the eighteenth century, the House of Commons

represented the state of opinion of the majority of the people, a majority which was eagerly desirous of peace and of relief from the burdens of war, but only of a peace which should not involve a disturbance of the new constitution and of the Protestant religion. The ignorance of Louis XIV. and his advisers of the sensitiveness on these two points of the English people, produced a rapid change of public opinion on the question of peace. In November 1700 the French King had, on the death of Charles II. of Spain, repudiated the Partition Treaties of 1698 and of 1700, by which the kingdom of Spain was to be so divided on the death of its existing ruler as not to fall to the lot of the Bourbons. With utter disregard for these international engagements, which were made to preserve the peace of Europe, Louis accepted for his grandson, the Duke of Anjou, the crown which by the will of the late sovereign was bequeathed to the Dauphin's son. This act would probably have had no great effect on English opinion, nor have produced a European war, had not Louis towards the end of 1701, with the assent of the Spanish authorities, taken possession of the line of Spanish fortresses which bordered the Netherlands, and ten days after the Triple Alliance was signed (7th September 1701), on the death of James II., recognised the Pretender as King of England. The Tory Parliament, which during its brief and stormy existence

had impeached the Whig leaders, Portland, Somers, Halifax, and Orford, and had committed the Kentish petitioners to prison, no longer representing the feeling of the country, was dissolved by the King in November, and was replaced by one in which the Whigs were in a majority. The general election of November–December 1701 was fought on the issue of confidence or no confidence not in a Ministry responsible to the country, but in the King, who was his own Prime Minister, and the country gave him the answer he desired. When the sixth and last Parliament of William III. assembled (30th December 1701), Harley was again chosen Speaker, but only by fourteen votes, over Sir Thomas Littleton, the candidate of the Court, and William opened the new session by a speech which became a political testament. Not only did he formulate a foreign policy by which England was to take her part as a continental power, but also, under, it is said, the advice of Somers, he recommended domestic divisions which affected parties for many years after his death. "Let there be no other distinction heard of among us for the future but of those who are for the Protestant religion and the present Establishment, and of those who mean a Popish prince and a French Government." This was at the moment an effective war-cry, for it rallied to the Government that great mass of non-party men who would

not tolerate the return of the Stuarts, or any risk to the Protestant religion, but it helped to create a parliamentary party system by accentuating national divisions during the whole of Harley's political career.

It was not until the 4th of May 1702, almost two months after the death of William, that war was declared. The new Parliament, which met on 20th October 1702, was Tory, and Harley for the third time became Speaker. The change of party predominance in the House of Commons was remarkable but not surprising, since the Tories were not for the time being opposed to a popular war, and there had rapidly sprung up a feeling of personal loyalty to the new sovereign, which stirred the Conservative forces in the constituencies. Godolphin gathered under his leadership a Tory Cabinet, which presently resolved itself into a Whig administration; but at first, though the war was a Whig war, and was waged to carry out the principles of European policy, which had seemed good to the late King and to his Whig friends, it had the approval of the Tories and of the people.

But it introduced into English politics, at the moment when political and parliamentary parties were assuming their modern form, a factor at once extraordinary and powerful, affecting Harley more than any other statesman. By temperament and by opinion he was averse to England becom-

ing involved in European complications, costly both in money and life. Thus the war was a practical reason for a closer alliance between Harley and the Tory party, which presently became for the next few years the Peace party. But in internal politics there were two cardinal divisions in existence from the beginning to the end of the reign of Anne. The Whigs, except on one singular and abnormal occasion, were the defenders of religious freedom and toleration, and they were unanimously and strenuously in favour of the Hanoverian succession. The Tories, on the other hand, were the Church party, were full of sectarian bitterness, and some were unquestionably Jacobites. Had there been no war Harley's natural place would have been with the Whigs, but the war prevented this political connection, and was the cause of introducing into his career curious and remarkable complications.

Once the new war was commenced, the national strength was spent upon it: it engrossed the attention of the country and of Parliament, the thoughts of Godolphin and his Ministers. Such was the state of affairs whilst Harley during his third term occupied the Chair of the House of Commons —a place to which his moderation both of opinion and in debate, the absence of party bias which was so conspicuous in his character and speeches, and his knowledge of the practice of Parliament,

rightly entitled him. In this position he remained until April 1705. A year previously, however, he had become also Secretary of State with apparent reluctance and under some pressure from Marlborough, who recognised in him a politician positively loving parliamentary business, and free from that party bias which the soldier so thoroughly detested.

"I am sensibly concerned," wrote the general in 1703, "at what you mention of the heats that continue between the two parties, and should esteem it the greatest happiness of my life if I could any way contribute towards the allaying them. Upon this occasion you will give me leave to be so free as to tell you that what you write confirms me very much in the desire I have for some time had, of retiring from these uneasy and troublesome broils." [1]

Harley thus joined the Government almost as a non-party man. At most he was a moderate Tory, not in principle, but to some extent because, in addition to causes already stated, both his father and he had opposed what they regarded as the extravagant financial policy of the late King,[2] which

[1] Longleat MSS., Hist. MSS. Com., p. 56.

[2] "Sir E. Harley . . . in this and the succeeding Parliaments constantly opposed the extravagant ways they were then taking for running the nation into debt, and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. This drew upon him and his family the implacable rage of the Lord Wharton, Lord Somers, and the other Whigs of their party."—Memoirs of the Harley family, by Edward Harley, Auditor of the Exchequer. *Harley Papers*, iii. 645.

was supported by the Whigs, who in domestic politics were the friends of civil and religious freedom. He superseded the overbearing and bigoted Nottingham, and he had so high a reputation for sobriety of thought and action, that Godolphin might reasonably expect that by securing him as a member of his administration he had definitely attached to his middle party one who, if nominally a Tory, would carry with him the moderate members of that party without offending the Whigs, on whom he could most steadily rely. Nor would Godolphin have been disappointed if he had not underestimated the violence of partisanship and the bitterness of party hostility, as well as the influence of the Queen. An uncertain and obscure political factor, she was neither stupid nor spiritless. She was impressed with the idea of the sovereign's personal responsibility, but she was greatly under the influence of those around her. Her mind was neither resolute nor quick; she was affected by constant ill-health, and the only consistent political motive which influenced her was a predilection for the High Church party, which necessarily produced a dislike of the Whigs, identified as they were with the Nonconformists. It is needless to attempt to apportion minutely how much of each political action of the Queen belonged to her initiative or to the advice and the support of her immediate

friends; but whether moved by her own volition or by those around her, she had an important influence on the course of events.

The accession of Harley to the Cabinet gave Godolphin more than a painstaking and zealous member of his administration, for Harley at once became the most trusted and the most intimate of his colleagues, upon whose judicious advice in regard to home and foreign affairs, and to many delicate personal matters, it was his practice constantly to rely. Godolphin's confidence in Harley necessarily increased Marlborough's trust in the new Secretary of State, and there is no stronger confutation of the erroneous view which has often been taken of Harley's capacity, than the unbounded trust in his zeal and abilities which was shown by Godolphin and Marlborough from 1704 to 1707. Harley's tone towards Godolphin during this period, as indicated by his correspondence, was one of an almost too subservient humility, which may well have led Godolphin to think that Harley would never differ from him on any vital point of policy; while, on the other hand, Godolphin's unconcealed reliance on him may easily have deceived even so sagacious a man as Harley, and caused him to believe that he was too valuable a colleague to be dismissed from Godolphin's administration.[1] He underrated Harley's political

[1] Longleat MSS., Hist. MSS. Com., p. 51.

foresight and firmness, and he could not forecast the influence of the war on popular feeling.

Harley took office in May, amid universal congratulation. "The superiority of your genius," wrote the Duke of Shrewsbury, a nobleman second to none in the country in influence and sound judgment, "will make that easy to you which others have found vexatious."[1]

In August (1704) Marlborough fought the battle of Blenheim. When the civilised world was ringing with his victory, the Tories could not hope for popular support in any attacks that they might make on the General or on the policy of the administration which supported him.

Blenheim gave renewed confidence to the Whigs, and enabled Harley easily to rally round him the moderate Tories. His parliamentary tact was needed by the Ministry, for the extreme members of the Tory party, elated by their success at the last general election, and relying on the High Church predilections of the Queen, had thrown aside any assumption of religious toleration, and early in the new Parliament carried through the House of Commons a Bill to prevent Occasional Conformity. That practice was certainly not theoretically admirable, and it was one which De Foe, friend though he was of the Dissenters, was constantly criticising. But it was the result

[1] Longleat MSS., Hist. MSS. Com., p. 57.

of intolerant legislation, and it was the only means by which a Dissenter was eligible for various civil offices; by taking the Sacrament once he complied with legal conditions. But the Bill, in December 1702, was ultimately lost. Neither Lords nor Commons would surrender their amendments; conference after conference was in vain. To the annoyance of many of the more reasonable Tories, the most virulent of the party, actuated by an extraordinary sectarian bitterness, and a positive personal animosity to the Dissenters, in the following session (25th November 1703) introduced and carried a Bill on similar lines, but more moderate in detail, through the House of Commons. It was of course rejected by the Lords. Such were then the strange complexities of party warfare, that it was supported by Godolphin and opposed by the majority of the Bishops. But the subject was not allowed to slumber, and presently the headstrong Tories decided (1704) to "tack" an Occasional Conformity to a Land Tax Bill, with the object of obliging the House of Lords—unable by constitutional usage to reject money Bills—to pass the purely political measure. Harley's conduct now justified Marlborough's selection, for it was he who took the chief share in defeating this manœuvre in the House of Commons. The House of Lords was certain to throw out, directly or indirectly, the Occasional Conformity Bill alone;

joined to a money Bill it might not be so easy. Thus this step of the High Churchmen was objectionable to Harley from every point of view: as a friend of the Dissenters and of political moderation, and as a lover of parliamentary precedent. "I hope everybody will do you the justice to attribute the greatest share of it (the rejection of this motion to 'tack'), to your prudent management and zeal for the public";[1] so wrote Marlborough to Harley. And yet even this obvious action gave rise to rumours of deceit. The Tories, it was said, took this parliamentary course on the advice of the Speaker—advice given only, it was asserted, in order to decoy them into a snare.[2]

Blenheim—as has been said—smoothed Harley's official and parliamentary path; he would be the first to see its influence on public opinion. Six years later it was the unpopularity of the war—of which he was equally aware—that enabled him to supersede Godolphin. In following the fortunes of the statesmen of the age of Anne, personal contests and Court intrigues have been too much considered. Larger causes were affecting the course of English politics: the progress of the European war, the unrecognised strength of the English party system,

[1] 16th December 1704, Coxe's *Marlborough*, ii. 69. Longleat MS., Hist. MSS. Com., p. 65.

[2] *Parl. Hist.*, vol. vi. p. 359. The "tack" was rejected by 251 to 134 votes, Harley voting in the majority. *Parl. Hist.*, vol. vi. p. 368.

the powerful factor which existed in the sovereign's individual will, and the intense determination of the people never to accept a Roman Catholic sovereign, or to allow any attack on the Established Church.

For eleven months Harley was both Speaker and Secretary of State—offices to modern ideas so incompatible. As Speaker he was on the best of terms with Godolphin and with Marlborough, and was gaining a unique influence both in Parliament and the country. But in the beginning as in the end of his official life the same things were said of him. When he became Secretary of State he was called a "trimmer" by those who disliked him, and he was taunted with having "caressed" both parties. When, ten years later, he ceased to be Lord Treasurer, the same accusation, uttered with greater emphasis, was heard from one end of England to the other: it was caused by an adherence to a particular course of political conduct, which was based on a reliance, not on the moderate members of one party only, but on the hope that he might have their support, and at the same time by his moderation of political opinion gain some favour with their opponents. It was an elaborate and a continuous attempt to recognise and yet to nullify the newly developing party system by a man to whom it was repugnant. Harley never attempted to form a middle party;

he took parties as they were, and endeavoured to pursue a course of conduct which was necessarily insincere and calculated to dupe both sides. This remarkable political position, which he had secured with so much skill and tact, is well illustrated by a singularly frank letter written in 1704 by his friend, Stanley West, at the very moment that his management of the House of Commons was so pleasing to Marlborough.

"For want of other information, be pleased to give me leave to acquaint you with my observation of people's opinion of your Honour. You have a happier fate attending you than any in the present Ministry, or in former either. You are entirely master of two opposite parties. Both think you to be theirs, and confide in you as such, to promote their several different interests. Whatever distinguishing favour you show to either side, doth not lessen your esteem in the other party; 'tis all ascribed to a depth of policy which they cannot comprehend, and which they say is peculiar to yourself, but is not a leaving the party. And in such an unprecedented manner do you manage the heads of both parties, that both sides believe, at a proper time and occasion, you will show yourself entirely in their distinct interests. I am very glad to see so eminent a post free from the reproach that usually hath attended it, and to

SIDNEY, EARL OF GODOLPHIN

From a portrait in the possession of the Duke of Leeds at Hornby Castle, Yorks
(Probably by Sir Godfrey Kneller)

observe your Honour stands so right in the people's opinion, being very confident you will so manage the weaknesses and follies of both sides as will in the issue redound to the true interest and advantage of the kingdom.

"The Duke, the Treasurer, and yourself are called the Triumvirate, and reckoned the spring of all public affairs; and that your interests and counsels are so united and linked together that they cannot be broken, nor in any danger of it during this reign." [1]

It was natural that there should be this connection between Harley and Godolphin, for in many points they were strikingly alike; yet it is remarkable that men so similar in political opinion, and so little fitted in many ways to be leaders, should have been at the head of affairs throughout the reign of Queen Anne. "Both," writes Mr. Lecky, "were slow, cautious, temporising, moderate, and somewhat selfish men, tedious and insufficient in debate, and entirely without sympathy with the political and religious fanaticism of their party." For the moment, one wonders how these politicians, apparently so ordinary in character, could ever have carried on the business of the nation. But while this description sets out in negatives certain similarities of both statesmen, it omits to de-

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 215.

scribe those qualities which led to their attainment of power, qualities which since their time have over and over again been found to be the most valuable for success, not only in the House of Commons, but in every representative assembly in the world —patience and perseverance and good temper, tact and knowledge of business, and an intuitive insight (in Godolphin it was often humorous) into the weaknesses of men with whom they came into contact. By the admission of all his contemporaries, Harley possessed a first-rate capacity as a leader in the House of Commons, and his decline may perhaps be dated from the day when he quitted it.

CHAPTER III

HARLEY AND DE FOE

1703–1714

DE FOE IN NEWGATE—RELEASED BY HARLEY'S INTERCESSION—THE RELATIONS BETWEEN DE FOE AND HARLEY—DE FOE'S WORK—HIS MISSION TO SCOTLAND—HIS HOPE OF OFFICIAL EMPLOYMENT—HIS OPINION ON HARLEY'S FALL IN 1708—CONTINUES IN GODOLPHIN'S SERVICE AFTER HARLEY'S DISMISSAL—HIS RETURN TO HARLEY IN 1710—PROSECUTED FOR LIBEL IN 1713—INTERCESSION OF HARLEY—THE *REVIEW*—HARLEY AND JOURNALISM.

IT was in 1703, while Harley was still Speaker, that he entered into close relations with De Foe. In December 1702, when religious passions were roused by the parliamentary controversy upon occasional conformity, De Foe had published *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters.* Assuming the character of a High-Flyer—as the extreme intolerant High Churchmen were called, whom above all others De Foe disliked—the writer advised the extirpation of the Nonconformists. Characterised by the realism which marks all De Foe's works, from a *New Voyage round the World* to *Robinson Crusoe*, the pamphlet was approved by many Tories. But its publication resulted in De Foe's prosecution for libelling the Church. He was convicted, and sentenced (July 1703) to imprisonment and the pillory,

and for the last three days of the month stood in Cornhill, in Cheapside, and at Temple Bar, amid a friendly crowd, who drank in pots of beer to the health of the author of the *True-Born Englishman* and of the spirited *Hymn to the Pillory.*

It was in November 1703[1] that, through Harley's good offices, De Foe was set at liberty. "What you propose about De Foe may be done when you will and how you will," wrote Godolphin to Harley on the 26th of September, and on the 4th of November he remarks, "I have taken care on the matter of De Foe." On the 9th comes the first of those numerous and vivid letters, full of varied facts and fresh suggestions, which for ten years De Foe was constantly writing to Harley. There was but one interruption in their course—during the period that Harley was out of office.

[1] De Foe's biographers have placed his release from Newgate as having occurred about August 1704, the *Review* as having been begun in Newgate in February 1704, and a *Collection of the Most Remarkable Casualties and Disasters which happened in the Late Dreadful Tempest both by Sea and Land* as being the first of his imaginative works. The storm reached its height on 26th November, and De Foe tells (p. 25), with every appearance of truth, how on the preceding day he was nearly injured by materials from a house. The book itself is largely a compilation of accounts of the storm, many of which have the appearance of simple narratives of facts. This publication, taken in connection with the letters at Welbeck, is evidence of De Foe's release in 1703. That he was set at liberty in 1703 is further substantiated by letters of the 12th and presumably 16th May 1704 (*Harley Papers*, ii. p. 83), as to meetings with Harley, and a letter from an informer that De Foe was in Canterbury in June 1704 (p. 93), a fact quite inconsistent with his release in August 1704. The dates are plainly legible in the original letters.

"As there is something surprising in your bounty to a mortified stranger, so I am more than usually at a loss in what manner to express my sense of it; but at the same time that you stoop to do good you subject yourself to a necessity of bearing the impertinence of a thankful temper.

"Of all the examples in sacred story none moves my indignation like that of the ten lepers who were healed by our Saviour. I, like that one grateful wretch, am come back to pay the tribute of thankfulness which this so unexpected goodness commands from me.

"And though I think myself bound to own you as the principal agent of this Miracle, yet, having some encouragement from you to expect more particularly to *know my benefactors*, I cannot but wish for that discovery, that my acknowledgments may in some measure be proportioned to the quality of the persons, and the value of the favour.

"It remains for me to conclude my present application with this humble petition, that if possible I may by some means or other know what I am capable of doing, that my benefactors, whoever they are, may not be ashamed of their bounty as misapplied. Not that I expect to be able to merit so much goodness; but as a grateful temper is always uneasy to be loaded with benefits, so the *virtue* which I call gratitude has always so

much pride in it, as makes it push at a retribution, though 'tis unable to effect it. Whoever are the principals in this favour, I cannot but profess myself a debtor wholly to yourself, who till I may be otherwise instructed appears the original *as to me.* And in the kindness the manner is so obliging, and all the articles of it so generous, that as a man astonished at the particulars, I am perfectly unable to express my sense of it.

"Only in the humblest manner I can most earnestly pray that I may have some opportunity put into my hands by Providence to make more explicit acknowledgments. . . ."[1]

Harley could not have assisted De Foe at a more critical or opportune moment, for the business at his brick and pantile manufactory at Tilbury had been ruined by his imprisonment. "All my prospects," he wrote to Harley after his release, "were built on a manufactorie I had erected in Essex; all the late King's bounty to me was expended there. I employed a hundred poor families at work, and it began to pay me very well. I generally made six hundred pounds profit per annum. I began to live, and took a good house, bought me coach and horses a second time. I paid large debts gradually, small ones wholly, and many a creditor after composition whom I found

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 75.

poor and decayed, I sent for and paid the remainder to, though actually discharged."[1] The brighter De Foe painted his previous good fortune the gloomier appeared his subsequent state, and it is not improbable that this picture is a little overcoloured, for it was the prelude to an appeal for help. He had seven children, "whose education," he remarks, with his usual common sense, "calls on me to furnish their heads if I cannot their purses." Yet certainly for the moment De Foe was in a friendless and moneyless state, from which he was undoubtedly rescued by Harley. Thus began a connection which had no little influence on the careers of both men. How much Harley owes to De Foe's ability it is hardly possible to overestimate; to De Foe his patronage was for the next ten years a constant source of livelihood—the means of a most active existence as a pamphleteer and a political agent.

Harley's action, however, did more than restore De Foe to freedom and to prosperity, it placed him —now in the prime of life[2]—again in touch with the leading members of the Government. He had been in the confidence of William, but in little more than a year he had, as he says, tasted the difference between the closet of a king and the dungeon of Newgate. Voluminous as Voltaire and Diderot, he was not a philosophical writer stimulating the minds

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 88. [2] De Foe was born in 1660 or 1661.

of his readers by abstract theories; his gifts were of a quite opposite order, for he had an extraordinary power of formulating practical projects, to execute which a man high in office was necessary. So that when De Foe gained Harley's support, he had obtained not only personal freedom and an assured income, but also the possibility of securing the fulfilment of some, at any rate, of the innumerable plans which were always in his head, in many of which he anticipated the reforms of a later age.

But long though their connection lasted, Harley was never united to De Foe by that tie of personal friendship which marked his intercourse with Swift. Their relations were always strictly business-like, though it pleased De Foe to assert that they were based on other grounds — that on Harley's part they began through "a generous compassion to a man oppressed by power without a crime," that on his side his services were "founded rather, and indeed entirely, on a deep sense of duty and gratitude for that early goodness." He avowed that he had full liberty to pursue his "own reason and principles, so that he could declare his innocence in the black charge of bribery."[1] All this and more he wrote to Harley at a time when he was in receipt of a fixed salary from the Government, and of special payments from Harley himself, and he reiterated it so persistently in public, that there

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 213.

has hitherto been a doubt whether or to what extent he was a paid agent. But it should never be forgotten that, though De Foe and Harley were united by a tie of personal and reciprocal interest, pecuniary on the one side and political on the other, they had also much in common. Each possessed a sound sense producing a moderation of political opinion; intolerance, whether among High Churchmen or Dissenters, Whigs or Tories, was repugnant to each, and each set great store on peace, progress, and social improvement. It is thus not difficult to understand how De Foe and Harley could work together, differing sometimes, as in the case of the peace with France, or on the manner of securing an object, but agreeing on general principles of policy. De Foe was certainly not always consistent in his treatment of political questions: thus, after Harley lost office in 1708, his advocacy of the Whig party was somewhat opposed to his subsequent writings in favour of peace. But his relationship with Harley was characterised by a general consistency of political argument which shows a community of opinion between the writer and the statesman. During the whole of their connection De Foe never hesitated to tell his patron when he needed money, and Harley was never niggardly in his payment, though no one could have had a better return for his expenditure. Just as Harley employed Ogilvie,

or "Jean Gassiot" as he called himself, in Paris, so he utilised the services of De Foe, or—to give him his assumed names — "Mr. Goldsmith" or "Claude Guilot," in England and Scotland. De Foe would have fulfilled his duty had he stated only such facts as would be useful to his employer, but he did a great deal more, for he delighted to give his personal views upon every point which occurred to a mind never at rest, and extraordinarily fertile and imaginative. His opinions were always liberal, and his vivid imagination was constantly creating plans of social and economical progress. Nothing, indeed, is more noticeable than the outspokenness of De Foe and Swift, so opposed not only to Harley's habitual reticence, but to the vagueness and want of candour which at that time marked the communications of so many politicians and statesmen.

Harley did more than effect De Foe's release, he obtained for him an allowance—probably secret in its payment — which after the loose fashion of the times was by no means always punctually paid, a fact of which De Foe took good care to remind his patron. "I am forced"—this was in 1712 — "by importuning circumstances to remind you that of that allowance or appointment, which by your intercession or Her Majesty's goodness I enjoy, there are two quarters behind, which insensibly (except to me) elapsed during the melan-

choly interval when your Lordship was hurt and things unsettled."[1]

Not long after De Foe's release in 1703, Harley began to use De Foe's marvellous capacity for obtaining intelligence, and for describing the results of his journeys. In the summer of 1704 he was commissioned to travel through England, to ascertain the opinions of different localities, and to report systematically to Harley. In July, as he is on the point of starting, he enthusiastically declares, "I firmly believe the journey may be the foundation of such an intelligence as never was in England."[2]

De Foe kept his word, and by his means Harley was enabled to obtain a view of English opinion which was invaluable to him in forming a judgment upon his political course. De Foe's letters were full not only of facts but of original ideas deduced from what he saw and heard, and of vivid sketches of men and places. He was more than a mere collector of information; it was part of his task to mould opinion and to lead it towards that temperance in political thought on which Harley set so high a value.

"In all parts," says De Foe to his patron in 1705, at the end of a long paper which he calls "An Abstract of my Journey with Casual Observations on Public Affairs," "the greatest hindrance

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 214. See also *ibid.*, p. 275.
[2] *Harley Papers*, ii. 106.

to the forming the people into moderation and union among themselves, next to the Clergy, are the Justices."[1] In a letter of somewhat earlier date he speaks of "spreading principles of temper, moderation, and peace." These were the principles which Harley tried to follow from the beginning until the end of his parliamentary career; it was his manner of applying them to practical politics that caused so much adverse criticism in his own and in succeeding ages.

The connection between Harley and De Foe is of even greater moment in 1706, when the union with Scotland became the burning question of domestic politics, and the articles of union which were signed in London in July were handed to the Scottish people and Parliament for discussion. As one of Godolphin's administration, Harley is entitled to the credit which belongs to every member of a Cabinet which carries a measure so far-reaching in its consequences as the union between England and Scotland. Of the Lord Treasurer's policy Harley unquestionably approved, and he actively aided it.[2] As the negotiations

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 272.

[2] The following is one example. 23rd July 1706, in reference to the Duke of Queensberry, Harley says, "I believe now he has an opportunity of serving himself and at the same time doing the greatest thing for the advantage and settlement of his own country such as no man before ever had in so easy a way—what I mean is as to the union which I might plainly show it is his Grace's interest to promote."—*Harley Papers*, ii. 318.

approached the final stage, Harley's chief ally was De Foe, who, after completing his survey of England, was sent by him to Scotland upon a similar errand.

On 13th September 1706, De Foe states that he was about to wait on the Minister, and take his last instructions before departing for Scotland, when he received the order to leave at once, without further conferences. He remarks that as Harley has acquainted the Queen and the Lord Treasurer with his mission, it is important that he should be successful in it, and he then proposes to set down what he understands his present business to be, summarising with great clearness and brevity the results of the conversations which have taken place between himself and Harley :—

"However, that if my notions are wrong I may be set right by your instructions, I beg leave, though it be beginning at the wrong end, to set down how I understand my present business, as follows :—

"1. To inform myself of the measures taking, or parties forming, against the Union, and apply myself to prevent them.

"2. In conversation and by all reasonable methods to dispose people's minds to the Union.

"3. By writing or discourse, to answer any objections, libels, or reflections on the Union, the English, or the Court, relating to the Union.

"4. To remove the jealousies and uneasiness of people about secret designs here against the Kirk," etc.[1]

De Foe presently breaks away from business, and as usual concludes by a diffuse demand for money, which he was constantly needing, and which Harley ungrudgingly supplied. No man could have done his work more zealously and effectively. Not only was he a collector of information, he was also an apostle of the Union—he was a modern diplomatist and journalist in one. Through Harley his letters reached the Lord Treasurer, further proof, if it were needed, that Godolphin and the Secretary of State were working in harmony for a common end so far as this particular measure was concerned.

"De Foe's letter," writes Godolphin on 16th January 1707, "is serious and deserves reflection. I believe it is true, and it ought to guide us very much in what we are doing here, and to take care in the first place to preserve the peace of that country."[2]

So closely united were the fortunes of De Foe and Harley at this time, that it is convenient to follow their intercourse for the next few years. After the completion of De Foe's mission to Scotland, Godolphin, on Harley's persuasion, was

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 327.

[2] *Harley Papers*, ii. 382.

looking round for a permanent post in which he might place him. At one time there was a question of an office in the Customs, but nothing came of it.

"I was just on the brink of returning," De Foe writes to Harley in September 1707, "when, like life from the dead, I received your last with my Lord Treasurer's letter. But hitherto his Lordship's goodness to me seems like messages from an army to a town besieged, that relief is coming, which heartens and encourages the famished garrison but does not feed them."[1] And on hope, so far as official employment was concerned, De Foe had, perhaps fortunately for posterity, to feed all his life. For to his need for money, as much as to his superabundant vitality, we may ascribe the many future products of his pen.

As Harley's fall drew near, the preference which De Foe appears to have had for him as an employer by no means lessened. On 10th February 1708 he wrote—

"The report which fills the mouths of your enemies of your being no longer Secretary of State alarmed me a little, I confess, and particularly brought me to wait upon you this night. Others compliment you on the accession of your good fortune; I desire to be the servant of your worst

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 445.

days. And yet, upon my word, I know not whether to congratulate or condole. I think verily you are delivered from a fatigue which never answered the harassing you in such a manner and the wasting your hours in the service of those that understand not how to value or reward in proportion to merit. Particularly you are delivered from envy, and I persuade myself you are removed from a tottering party that you may not share in their fall.

"My business was only in duty and gratitude to offer myself to you against all your enemies. My sphere is low, but I distinguish nobody when I am speaking of the ill-treatment of one I am engaged to, as to you, in the bonds of an inviolable duty. I entreat you to use me in anything in which I may serve you, and that more freely than when I might be supposed following your rising fortunes. 'Tis also my opinion you are still rising —I wish you as successful as I believe you unshaken by this storm."[1]

De Foe was at all times an optimist, and his foresight and knowledge of public feeling enabled him accurately to forecast the future; and now he saw that the tide would presently turn in Harley's favour. Thus he could write in this cheerful tone. And Harley, relying much on De Foe's opinion,

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 477.

would gather confidence from it; and so, looking forward, each saw that in no long time other influences would become powerful, and that a temporary disappearance from office was but the prelude to a period of power.

But neither personal liking nor faith in the future prevented De Foe, when his patron retired from office in 1708, from continuing to serve Godolphin; for neither he nor Harley had the least sentiment about their relations. De Foe has told how Harley, "in the most engaging terms," allowed him to offer his services to the Lord Treasurer, whom hitherto he had only served through the intervention of Harley. The incident illustrates the absence of bitterness in Harley's nature. He had been accused by Godolphin of ingratitude and treachery, and through his influence he had been compelled to resign his office. But he did not hesitate for a moment to approve the continuance of the ablest journalist of the time in the service of his opponent. Nor, though during the intervening years of opposition De Foe had been of great service to Godolphin, did Harley in 1710, when he reached that supreme position to which De Foe had looked forward, refuse again to employ him. Nothing could be more plausible or more in keeping with his character than the letter which De Foe wrote at that time to Harley.

"I cannot," he says on the 12th of August 1710, "but heartily congratulate you on the happy recovery of your honour and trusts in the Government. Her Majesty is particularly just in placing you in this station, where you had been so coarsely treated. It is with a satisfaction that I cannot express that I see you thus established again; and it was always with regret that when you met with ill-treatment I found myself left and obliged by circumstances to continue in the service of your enemies. And now, though I am sunk by the change, and know not yet whether I shall find help in it or no, yet I not only rejoice in the thing, but shall convince you I do so, by publicly appearing to defend and reconcile things, if possible, to open the eyes of a wilfully blind and prejudiced party. In order to this, I shall wait on you in the evening with those sheets I showed you, finished from the press, and to lay before you some measures I am taking to serve that honest principle which I know you espouse, at a time so nice and when every man thinks 'tis in his power to wound the Government through the sides of the Treasury, and to run down their masters by running down the public credit. I have two or three times set pen to paper to move you in my own case, yet cannot put on assurance enough to do it, believing also your own generosity, and the former goodness I have had such experience of, will move you in my behalf.

"Providence seems to cast me back upon you (I write that with joy), and lays me at your door, at the very juncture when she blesses you with the means of doing for me what your bounty shall prompt to.

"But in recommending myself to you, I would fain have an eye to your service. I would not be an *invalid*, and my hope is, that as you were pleased to recommend me to another as one that could be made useful, and who it was worth while to encourage, the same argument will move you to entertain the man yourself, since your merit and the voice of the nation places you in the same point in which you were pleased to present me to another.

"I cease to press you on this head; I shall study to make myself useful, and leave the rest wholly to your goodness."[1]

"Useful" scarcely expresses the value of De Foe's services to Harley during the next four years. Useful he was in the continuation of his mission to Scotland, which was resumed in October,[2] but extraordinary in the fertility of his financial and practical suggestions.

That the employment of De Foe was not discovered by Harley's enemies, is surprising. Had he

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 562.

[2] Queries for Management, 21st October 1710, *Harley Papers*, ii. 616.

been less ingenious and less bold it would certainly have become known. The secret, indeed, nearly became public in 1713, when De Foe published, among other pamphlets, one which he called *Reasons against the Hanover Succession.* Part of it was, he says, irony, the rest "clear and professed banter upon the Pretender." But the irony was so clever that he now deceived the Whigs, as ten years before he had fooled the Tories; and proceedings on their behalf were taken by a member of the House of Commons named Benson, against its author, on the ground that the essay was treasonable. He was brought before the Lord Chief Justice, but by Harley's management was admitted to bail. His gratitude was extreme, though no doubt his previous experience of Newgate caused him to have a lively appreciation of Harley's intercession.

"This is the third time I am rescued from misery and a jail by your generous and uncommon goodness; and this is the goodness for which the gratitude of this age would have me, against principle, conscience, honour, and gratitude, maltreat and abuse you, and for refusing which they fall upon me in this manner. But I am bound to your Lordship in bands too strong, and am sure, unless God and nature abandon me together, it is impossible I can forbear to serve your person and interest,

while I live, at what hazard soever. I should be unjust to Mr. Borrett if I did not acquaint you that he executed your orders so wisely, with so much caution, so much indifference, and yet with so just an authority, that no suggestion could be made of his being directed, and yet the end was immediately answered; and I was set free, giving two sufficient bail for £800 and myself £800."[1]

It is one thing, however, to be admitted to bail, another to be acquitted of a charge; and the difficulty before De Foe and his patron was to obtain an acquittal without revealing the connection between them, which would have diminished the effect of De Foe's writings, since he always posed as the independent and untrammelled exponent of his own clear and individual opinions. It is clear, too, that De Foe considered that this disclosure would be injurious to Harley and to his Ministry, as to himself.

"1. Their design is aimed at your Lordship and Her Majesty's interest, to let the nation see how formidable their faction is, and that they could overthrow any man who dared oppose them in spite of Her Majesty's favour or protection.

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 282.

"2. They aim at making a discovery to the nation who are or are not in your Lordship's service, so that their falling upon me must, as they thought, infallibly answer their end one way or other; for that if the Ministry did not protect me, they knew they should oppress and sink me by the partiality and favour of my Lord Chief Justice (whose conduct has been really wonderful in it), and if you did protect me, then they gained the other point by publishing first that I was secretly entertained and employed by you, which hitherto they have made much noise of, but could never prove; and secondly, that your Lordship should oppose a prosecution which seemed to be in behalf of the house of Hanover.

"They have a third end in all this, viz. merely to show an insult upon the Ministry, of which I need say no more here."[1]

But the unfailing ingenuity of De Foe suggested a means by which he could be both prosecuted and acquitted. He thought that a seeming prosecution might be begun, "only I must depend upon your Lordship that it be not pushed on," he cautiously remarks, and then he continues—

"1. This prevents their stirring in any separate prosecution effectually.

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 283.

"2. The true reason for not prosecuting it may be want of good evidence, which really will be wanting.

"3. They have no reason to examine why the Government does or does not prosecute after an information is laid.

"All this while I will complain loudly of the oppression, I will petition (I mean in print) to be brought to trial, and shall have abundant room to expose them for attacking me in a thing they cannot make out; and thus the pretence of being protected by your Lordship or the Ministry will be quite taken away.

"If there is any defect in this scheme which I cannot foresee, I humbly refer it to your wisdom; the reason of my proposing it is purely to disappoint them in that part of their malicious design which is pointed at your Lordship's person and administration. For there is no doubt but having a full stop put to their rage by your authority would be much more for my safety as well as reputation, particularly as it would make them cautious of falling upon me again; but I see who this bullet is shot at, and if they do this in the green tree, what would they do in the dry?"[1]

In the result, though Harley was obliged to

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 284.

obtain for De Foe a pardon under the Great Seal, their secret relations were never discovered.

His journeys over Scotland and England, the interviews here and there, the correspondence with London, would have been, one might suppose, sufficient employment for De Foe; but this man, incredibly active in mind and body, was able at the same time to write and to manage the *Review* from the 17th of February 1704 until July 1713. It appeared week by week, and its small sheets circulated over the whole of England. At first it was described as "A Review of the Affairs of France and of all Europe as influenced by that Nation," and the earliest numbers were marked by a clear intention to impress on the English people the strength of France and the reasons for it. The public must understand the power of the opponent with whom they were at war; there must be no national delusions. Gradually De Foe's paper lost its historical tone and its defined limits; with its second volume its title was extended, and it became a more General Review. Unlike Swift, who frankly avowed himself a Tory, De Foe always posed as a non-party man, as a patriot. "The cause of Liberty and the cause of Truth" were what he advocated, and his support of Harley was so effective because the writer and the Minister had the same ends in view. Yet the skill with which, in number after number of the

Review, De Foe maintains this independent attitude is remarkable. That he intended to advocate the general policy of those by whom he was employed there can be no doubt, and his connection with Harley fortunately gave him the opportunity to combine the support of a patron with the promulgation of his own fundamental ideas. Party peace, religious toleration, purity of elections, were Harley's objects as they were his. De Foe was a true reformer; his keen vision saw the social and political faults of his generation, and his equally sound common sense suggested the remedies for them; while his energy, his imagination, and his power of forcible yet homely literary expression made him the most effective and the most untiring publicist of his own or of any succeeding age. For him, too, foreign trade, influenced as it was by the spirit of adventure, had an extraordinary interest; it appealed to his practical sense as well as to his imagination, as we are constantly reminded in every page of his *New Voyage round the World*. On this great subject he expressed in the *Review* more than a mere individual opinion; he represented the spirit of the time, the desire for commercial expansion which was felt in every considerable city in the kingdom. In May 1713, shortly before the *Review* ceased to appear, the *Mercator* was started, and in this journal De Foe supported Harley's financial

measures and the commercial treaty which was to follow that of Utrecht. And all this time he was issuing other works on various subjects, among which is conspicuous the inimitable brochure which he called *Eleven Opinions about Mr. H——y* (1711). In it he professes to give a candid account of the opinions of several groups of politicians at home and abroad; but he first skilfully enlists the sympathy of the reader with those men whose views were best worthy of consideration, such as the moderate Dissenters and Tories, and against others, such as the extremists of the October Club. By a simple statement, therefore, of the favourable view taken by the former of Harley's management of public affairs, De Foe contrives to place before the wavering or indifferent politician excellent reasons for supporting the Prime Minister and his Government. And meanwhile, with amazing energy, De Foe was—it must be repeated—constantly travelling over England or to the north. Finally, in October 1714, he published *The Secret History of the White Staff*, which, though Harley publicly disavowed any complicity in its compilation, was a strikingly able and effective defence of his patron's political conduct.

It was the last service in that remarkable connection, for when, on the death of the Queen, the Whigs came into power, De Foe entered into the employment of the new Government.

Harley had ceased to be of value as a paymaster, and it was only as such that the late Prime Minister could be of use to De Foe. Yet this service on the one side and employment on the other are creditable to both men. In the main, De Foe advocated political and social progress, religious freedom and personal moderation. In what he said he certainly spoke his real opinions. For what he said he was paid by Harley and what he said was approved of by Harley. De Foe, who was Beaumarchais' equal as a liar, and whom he resembled in his versatility, his untiring energy, and his capacity as a man of affairs and of letters, on this occasion said no more than the truth when he wrote, "It is my great satisfaction," —and he is speaking here of the contents of the *Review*,—"that what first is founded on principle and reason, agreeable to conscience, equity, and the good of my country, ay, and to these unhappy people's interest too, if they understood their interest, is at the same time agreeable to your Lordship, and that while I am rendering you service I am discharging the debt of justice to truth and liberty, the great principle on which I hope I shall never cease to act, and which, while I pursue, I am always and sure to please and oblige you."[1]

Harley by his long engagement of De Foe

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 213.

shows the value he set on the growing power of journalism; indeed, its importance had been evident to him from the beginning of his public life. So early as 1702, when he was Speaker, he wrote to Godolphin on the subject—

"I . . . again take the liberty to offer to your Lordship that it will be of great service to have some discreet writer of the Government's side, if it were only to state facts right; for the generality err for want of knowledge, and being imposed upon by the storys raised by ill-designing men."[1]

By his patronage also of De Foe, Harley gave evidence of a liberalism of opinion that was constantly hampered by a party connection which, while it enabled him to attain great political power, was at the same time a political anomaly.

An example of this conflict between inclination and official necessity is to be found in the fact that a severe check was placed on the growth of journalism by the newspaper tax of 1712[2]—a tax which, while it pressed heavily on all journals, did not prevent the publication of the worst kind of libels. Less than a year after the passing of the measure by which the duty was created, "the

[1] Brit. Mus. Add. MSS., 28055.
[2] 10 Anne, c. xix. s. 101, July 1712.

unparalleled licentiousness of the Press in publishing seditious and scandalous libels" was referred to in the speech from the Throne—evidence of the ineffectiveness of the tax for the purpose for which it was created. If Swift is to be believed, Bolingbroke was the author of the measure, though Harley must necessarily have consented to it, since it is incorporated in a statute which deals with the whole question of the revenue. Endeavouring probably to meet the wishes of the Queen and of Parliament, he agreed to legislation which, while it added to the revenue, would have little effect—he may have thought—in curtailing the influence of the Press, upon which he set so high a value.

For, while the attention of politicians great or small was fixed on the intrigues which were carried on in London, and on personal rivalries and ambitions, Harley throughout his career had ever in mind the mass of his countrymen. By means of De Foe's writings he appealed during nearly all his official life to their common sense — for De Foe's journalism differed entirely from the malicious party squibs which delighted the coffee-houses of London and ridiculed the personal peculiarities of eminent men. It was a legitimate and a new way to influence public opinion; for before De Foe came into Harley's employment there had never been a really consecutive publication of printed

arguments addressed to the common sense of the whole of England, and the Lord Treasurer could never have sanctioned either the manner or the reasonings of De Foe without a robust belief in the force of democratic opinion even in an age when votes were often bought and sold like parcels of goods.

Important and noteworthy event, however, in the history of English journalism, as is the connection between Harley and De Foe from 1703 to 1714, it is the unique personality of De Foe which stands forth most vividly during this period. This was the memorable climax of his strenuous life. His correspondence with Harley recalls De Foe at this time very clearly—we can see the spare man, with the hardy brown complexion and clear grey eyes and the hawklike nose, active, untiring, and fearless, arguing with a Scotsman, expostulating with a Dissenter, smiling at a country vicar, always full of hope, and always wanting money, perpetually journeying from place to place, and when most men would have rested, only varying his labour, writing — with a mind ever fertile in expedient and suggestion—voluminous letters to Harley, or, with an interest which never flagged, preparing a new number of the *Review*.

CHAPTER IV

SECRETARY OF STATE

1705–1708

DIFFERENCE OF GODOLPHIN'S AND HARLEY'S VIEWS—GODOLPHIN'S ALLIANCE WITH THE WHIGS — RESULT ON HARLEY'S POSITION—THE DRAWBACK BILL—INCREASING COOLNESS BETWEEN HARLEY AND GODOLPHIN—THE QUEEN AND CHURCH PATRONAGE—ACCENTUATION OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HARLEY AND GODOLPHIN — HARLEY'S RESIGNATION OF OFFICE — HIS DEFINITE ALLIANCE WITH THE TORIES.

THE last three years of Harley's term of office as Secretary of State form an interesting period in his life, for during it there is to be observed in him a noticeable political development. From an administrator and a leading member of the House of Commons he gradually became the chief of one of the two great parties in the State. Wanting though he did some conspicuous and brilliant qualities which attract popular notice, this development could not have come to pass without personal traits which are by no means common—patience, courage, a capacity to utilise opportunity, and an unfailing tact. Most men would have hesitated to differ from so astute a politician as Godolphin, to oppose so bitter and

capable a group as the Junto which governed the Whigs; few would have perceived so clearly the strength which could be gained by an alliance with the Queen, or would have been willing and able to undertake the irksome and delicate task of securing and retaining her confidence.

The elections of 1705 had resulted in favour of the Whigs, and to this fact is undoubtedly due the first differences between Harley and the Lord Treasurer, which are visible in the spring of 1706, when a distinct cleavage of their views upon an important point of parliamentary support occurred. The Queen's servants, Godolphin states in a letter to Harley (the 22nd of March),[1] numbered 100 in the House of Commons, the Tories 190, and the Whigs 160. Then, asked the Lord Treasurer, was it the best course to rely on the Whigs, who had been supporting the Administration, or on the Tories, who were apparently adverse to it? He decided that Ministers should keep the 160 and rely on obtaining some stragglers from the 190, who, when "they found themselves disappointed, would willingly make a little fair weather again."

In other words, Godolphin now threw himself distinctly on to the side of the Whigs. But Harley had joined the Cabinet inclining to the Tories. He well knew that the Queen had a personal preference for them, and though he was always longing

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 291.

to follow a middle course, the decision of Godolphin rendered it necessary for him to gain some of that influence with the Queen which Godolphin would surely lose. To hope for the support of any Tories at all he must henceforth act to some extent in opposition to the Lord Treasurer, whose determination clearly gave Harley the opportunity of becoming for the time being the parliamentary head of the Tory party. In a sense, therefore, he was unwillingly forced to oppose his chief, and he was certain to incur the enmity of the Whigs if he would not in fact become, as did Godolphin, an ally of their party. He would have preferred to have remained in the Cabinet as a moderate Tory, but the course of strategy determined on by Godolphin forced him to defend his position, and ultimately led to his dismissal from office. If he had followed the practice of more recent times, Harley would in 1706 have handed his resignation to the Prime Minister, but the modern parliamentary and party system was then in its infancy, and Harley acted in consonance with the ideas of the age.

But while Godolphin's decision forced Harley to adopt an attitude in the Cabinet adverse to his chief, it is not clear that he took any steps actively hostile to him. The Drawback Bill of 1707 has been regarded as an instance of Harley's disloyalty to the Lord Treasurer; it may have been an error

of judgment in him to introduce it, but certainly it was an honest attempt to check what Godolphin's biographer has called a "fraudulent and mischievous" transaction, though one which in these days appears perfectly legitimate.

By the Act of Union, the articles of which were signed in February 1706, there was to be free trade between England and Scotland from 1st May 1707. Meanwhile the import duties were lower in Scotland than in England; it was therefore the most natural and business-like thing in the world for goods, as soon as the substance of the Union became known, to be imported in large quantities into Scotland, with a view to their subsequent transmission free of duty across the border. But these transactions aroused the jealousy of English merchants, and were mentioned by De Foe in the spring of 1707 both to Godolphin and to Harley; for De Foe, placed in Scotland to watch the progress of events, and to assist the cause of the Union, overlooked no detail, however slight, which had the least bearing on the momentous matter which was before the two countries. The introduction by Harley of a Bill to prevent the importation of goods into Scotland with a view to their evasion of the English duties immediately followed,[1] and it was under discussion at so late a period in the session as the month of April

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, vi. 580.

that a clause was inserted by Harley to give it a retro-active effect. Having regard to the hostility felt by many Scotsmen to the proposed Union, and to the extraordinary sensitiveness for the time being of the Scottish people, Harley's measure was clearly impolitic. He was always on the watch for the movements of public opinion, and well served though he was by De Foe, the expostulations of English merchants, who were near, probably impressed him more than the hostility of the Scotch, who were at a distance.

"I must," said De Foe, writing after the Bill had been put an end to by the closing of the session, "if Parliament had not dropped the Drawback Bill, have fled this country. It is scarce possible to describe to you the disgust that affair gave here."[1] Nor did Godolphin himself assert his authority to stop the measure; he regarded it as unwise and nothing more. "I have seen the clause," he says, certainly referring to the retrospective section, "and think it in some particulars impracticable and in others unreasonable, and so I believe it will be thought in the House of Lords, but how you will be able to deal with it in your House I cannot judge."[2]

For the Lord Treasurer to allow the Bill to proceed at all was in some respects to countenance it, but we must remember that ministerial responsi-

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 407. [2] *Harley Papers*, ii. 415.

bility was not understood then as in later years, and just as Godolphin did not put his veto on the Bill directly, though he disapproved of it, so Harley did not cease to press it because his chief objected to it. Under these circumstances it is scarcely justifiable or reasonable now to charge a statesman with disloyalty to a colleague. Harley certainly considered he was acting for the best in bringing in his Bill,[1] and as certainly underrated the hostility it would arouse in Scotland. He behaved as one would expect from his character and career, with an absence of the larger outlook of the statesman, and was actuated by the motives of a punctilious parliamentary financier.

It was a natural result of the fundamental difference between the policy of Godolphin and of Harley, a difference as visible to the one as to the other,[2] that Harley should (1707) resist the appointment of Sunderland as Secretary of State in place of the Tory Sir Charles Hedges. And it also followed that subsequently he should oppose Godolphin in a further alliance with the Whigs.

[1] See Harley's letter of explanation to De Foe, *Harley Papers*, ii. 418.

[2] "The concern you express in the close of your letter is very agreeable, and but due to what you could not but observe in me. I never had, nor ever can have, a thought of your being out of the Queen's service while I am in it; but I am as sure I neither desire nor am able to continue in it, unless we can agree upon the measures by which she is to be served both at home and abroad."—Godolphin to Harley, 18th September 1707, Longleat MSS., Hist. MSS. Com., p. 182.

"The Queen," he wrote to the Lord Treasurer in 1707, "is the centre of union. I dread the thought of running from the extreme of one faction to another, which is the natural consequence of party tyranny."[1] This being the position of the Queen, it was Harley's object to strengthen himself with her, and to fortify her in her personal objection to the Whigs. We may call this "caballing" if we like—in truth it was the conflict of opposing policies in the same Cabinet conducted according to the ideas of the age. Which of the two policies was the safest it is not easy to judge. Little as Harley liked the war, the time had not yet come to oppose it openly, and a good understanding with the Tories did not therefore involve an active policy of peace. Marlborough, desiring support from all sides and looking only to the successful conduct of the war, was a somewhat lukewarm believer in Godolphin's policy, and there was this strong point in favour of Harley's view, the Queen was so adverse to the Whigs, so much depended on her personal favour, that her preference for the Tories was an influence which would go far to give stability to an Administration chiefly composed of the members of that party. In Harley's opinion, whatever temporary strength Godolphin obtained by an alliance with the Whigs was more than counterbalanced by the favour he thereby lost

[1] Coxe's *Marlborough*, iii. 394.

with the Queen, and with all the Tories, whether extremists or moderates. But, on the other hand, the determination of the Whig peers to obtain power was so fixed and persistent, and the party was so strong, united, and well organised, that their influence was a factor which could not be neglected. It was a dilemma which might well puzzle the acutest politician.

But this difference of opinion between the Lord Treasurer and his Secretary of State necessarily caused all the efforts and the enmity of the Whigs to be directed against Harley. At the moment when they had overcome Godolphin, it appeared as if another statesman might unexpectedly and effectually bar their way to power. Anger was not unmixed with fear, for an intimacy had arisen between Harley and Abigail Hill, who had supplanted the Duchess of Marlborough as the favourite and the friend of the Queen. They believed that Harley's influence with Anne had enabled him successfully to oppose Godolphin and Marlborough, when the Sees of Chester and Exeter became vacant in 1707, and to induce the Queen to fill them with High Churchmen. But Church patronage was the thing above all others on which the Queen exercised her own judgment, and her inclination was distinctly in favour of the High Church party. In this instance, considered at the time by the Whigs as certain evidence of

Harley's influence with the Queen, there is not the smallest doubt that she acted entirely on her own opinion. But the importance attached by them to these appointments, and their unconcealed anger, reveals the true nature of the contest. The Junto were determined to obtain the government of the country, and to gain complete mastery over Anne, regardless alike of her feelings and her situation. The little knowledge of human nature shown by the Junto, by Marlborough, and by Godolphin at this crisis, is surprising. It was to the conspicuous absence of kindness and common sense in their relations with the Queen on the part of his opponents that to some extent the success of Harley in 1710 was due. But now Marlborough and Godolphin, having capitulated to the Junto, any person who advised the Queen contrary to their wishes or interests, was necessarily opposing both the Minister and the Commander-in-Chief. That Harley was endeavouring at this time to supplant Godolphin as Lord Treasurer there is no satisfactory evidence, and it is certain that he had no intention of superseding Marlborough. As Secretary of State, Harley held a high and laborious office. He was not a man of burning ambition, and he might with reason look forward to still higher honours in the normal course of a tranquil official career. He would have been content had Godolphin remained in office, relying

on the goodwill of the Queen and on the moderate Whigs and Tories. That he was trying to form some kind of combination against the Junto is certain, but it was a combination not against Marlborough and Godolphin personally, but against the group of peers who had captured them. Opposition to this band of aristocrats became opposition to Godolphin, and produced that outburst of feeling to which he gave way in his final letter to Harley.[1]

[1] On 17th September 1707, Harley wrote to Godolphin to deny that he was acting against him and that he had "directly or indirectly" taken part in the appointment of the Bishops of Chester and Exeter (Somerville's *Queen Anne*, p. 626, and Longleat MSS.).

On 18th September, in reply (Longleat MSS.), Godolphin, evidently hoping for a reconciliation, tells him that "I never had, nor ever can have, a thought of your being out of the Queen's service while I am in it."

On 5th December an interview took place (Somerville, p. 626).

On 30th January 1708, Harley wrote the following letter to Godolphin (Somerville, p. 628, and Longleat MSS.):—

"Last night Mr. Attorney acquainted me that I was fallen into your Lordship's displeasure—he would not tell me any particulars. This I could not but receive with the utmost grief, and had it not been so late I had given your Lordship the trouble of a letter to desire leave to call upon you to clear myself. This morning my Lord of Marlborough gave me permission to attend him upon a like occasion, and her Grace was pleased to tell me the particulars. I know it is impossible to ward against misrepresentations and misconstructions, or the application of things said generally to a particular purpose, which was never thought of; for I do solemnly protest I never entertained the least thought derogating from your Lordship or prejudicial to your interest. I am confident in my own innocency, and I know no better way to clear myself than to desire your Lordship will let me by my actions demonstrate the sincerity of my intention and my zeal and duty for your Lordship's person and service."

To this letter Godolphin replied apparently on the same day—

"I have received your letter and am very sorry for what has happened, to lose the good opinion I had so much inclination to

In his belief in the importance of the goodwill of the Queen to the Administration Harley was right; his mistake lay in overestimating the power of the Crown alone. Without a majority on her side in Parliament, and without the support of the country, the Queen could not effectually oppose the Junto; and at present that necessary majority and that popular support did not exist.

Fortune, too, favoured his opponents. A wholly unexpected and abnormal incident placed Harley

have of you, but I cannot help seeing nor believing my seniors. I am very far from having deserved it from you. God forgive you" (Somerville, p. 528, and Longleat MSS., Hist. MSS. Com., p. 190).

Against Harley's letter of 30th January has to be set Swift's letter to Archbishop King of 12th February. This letter contains gossip and hearsay only, and must therefore be critically considered; the statements in it can only be reconciled with Harley's assertions by assuming, which is probable, that an attempt to modify Godolphin's ministry was exaggerated into an attempt to supersede the Lord Treasurer.

"*12th Feb.* 1707–8.

". . . Mr. Harley had been some time, with the greatest art imaginable, carrying on an intrigue to alter the Ministry, and began with no less an enterprise than that of removing the Lord Treasurer, and had nearly effected it by the help of Mrs. Masham, one of the Queen's dressers, who was a great and growing favourite, of much industry and insinuation. It went so far that the Queen told Mr. St. John a week ago 'that she was resolved to part with Lord Treasurer,' and sent him with a letter to the Duke of Marlborough, which she read to him to that purpose; and she gave St. John leave to tell it about the town, which he did without any reserve, and Harley told a friend of mine a week ago that he was never safer in favour or employment. . . . It is said that Harley had laid a scheme for an entire new Ministry, and the men are named to whom the several employments were to be given; and though his project has miscarried, it is reckoned the greatest piece of Court skill that has been acted these many years" (Swift's *Works*, edited by Scott, 2nd ed. vol. xv. p. 287).

at too great a disadvantage for the time being to withstand them. He had in his office a clerk named William Greg, who entered into correspondence with Chamillart, the French Secretary of State. One of the packets which contained a communication from Greg was opened in Holland, and his treason was discovered. On being examined before the Privy Council, he at once acknowledged his guilt, and on the 16th of January was convicted of high treason at the Old Bailey. Greg's position was such as to afford ample grounds in the age of Anne for the circulation of the worst suggestions against Harley. He was more than a mere clerk. His kinsman, Hugh Greg, was English Resident at Copenhagen from 1693 to 1702, during the latter part of which time William Greg acted as his secretary. He was still in Denmark after this date, but in 1705 "he was out of business," as he says, referring in a letter to Harley to an offer of a tutorship—

"Twenty pounds a year did surprise me, yet when the meanness of my circumstances would have tempted me to close with his Lordship's conditions, prudence bade me stay and try whether your Honour could not better my fortune, which I should look upon as desperate were it not in so good hands."[1]

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 159.

Later we find him writing from Scotland; evidently sent to the north partly as a spy, partly as a diplomatist. Then he became poorer, and Harley probably placed him in his office merely for the purpose of retaining him in his service until he was again needed as a spy. It is certain, also, that it was Greg's poverty which caused him to disclose confidential papers to the French. In a memorandum of his examination before the Privy Council, in Harley's handwriting, there is, amongst other statements, one that Greg was to receive a hundred guineas for a particular piece of information. It is equally clear that strong attempts were made to cause Greg to reveal something adverse to Harley, but wholly without success; and in an account of his execution, sent to Harley by another confidential clerk, named Thomas, Greg's statement on the scaffold is repeated, that Harley was "perfectly innocent" of any knowledge of the treasonable correspondence.

We can thus clearly see how Greg came to his position in 1708, how he was enabled to obtain the information which he sold to France, and how suspicions could grow against his employer. The system of espionage is sometimes double-edged, and Harley on this occasion fell a victim to his own use of it. The agent in this instance was dishonest, so the master had to suffer. The risk of such treachery was not as great as one would expect

where so much dishonesty was rife, for one spy was under the eye of another. But what at other times would have been a mere political mischance, happening when it did, was sufficient to oblige Harley to retire from official life.

The dramatic events of those early February days have often been told: how Godolphin and Marlborough resigned their offices rather than continue in an Administration with Harley; how the Duchess with tears in her eyes placed her resignation also in the Queen's hands; and how at the Cabinet Council on the 8th of February, neither Godolphin nor Marlborough being present, the Duke of Somerset protested against the transaction of business, and the Queen thereupon hastily broke up the Council. Few scenes are sadder than some of the incidents in the repeated and dangerous crises which marked the reign of Anne. They demanded of the sovereign courage, sagacity, and resolution; they had to be encountered by a woman who was most unfitted to play a part among the ambitions and the intrigues of a singularly critical and unique historical period. For Anne, with the best intentions, was unfitted to her position. What a misfortune for a woman, born to enjoy a quiet domestic existence, to be called to cope with a destiny to which she was wholly unequal! Her simple character and homely tastes, her good intentions and her religious faith, would have made

the Queen a happy and a useful English lady. Instead, in her high position she was beset by troubles and perplexities, and was helpless and lonely amidst difficulties which would have tried the clearest mind.

On the 9th it was resolved by the House of Lords to appoint a Committee[1] to examine Greg, in the hope of obtaining from him information on which to base a charge of high treason against Harley. This was a distinct declaration of active hostility against him, and shows the lengths to which the enmity of party could be carried. On the 11th, bowing before the storm, he placed his resignation in the hands of an unwilling sovereign.[2] It was a party triumph for the Whigs, and a personal victory for Godolphin and Marlborough, but a victory which presently hastened Godolphin's downfall, partly from the individual strength of the dismissed Minister, and partly because it consolidated against the Lord Treasurer adverse elements at a most inopportune moment, and gave to his opponents in Parliament, at Court, and in the country, a leader in the prime of life, more capable at the instant than any other statesman of conducting an active opposition to a successful end, and of taking advantage of the change

[1] This Committee, which consisted of seven Whig peers, reported that there was no evidence to show that Harley had been guilty of any treasonable practices.

[2] Burnett, ed. *Dartmouth and Hardwicke*, v. 354.

CHAPTER V

IN OPPOSITION

1708–1710

GROWING ARROGANCE OF THE WHIGS—INCREASING STRENGTH OF THE TORIES AND CLERGY—HARLEY AND MRS. MASHAM—REVOLT OF THE QUEEN AGAINST THE WHIGS—DISMISSAL OF GODOLPHIN—HARLEY APPOINTED CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—HARLEY'S POLITICAL POSITION.

OF opposition by Harley to Godolphin's administration in the modern parliamentary sense of the word, there is no appearance during the next two years. Yet unquestionably during this period he was becoming more decidedly opposed to the war policy to which the Lord Treasurer was committed, and was patiently and quietly, but none the less effectively, preparing the way for a change of Government. His action was based, however, not on modern parliamentary lines, on open attacks on the Ministry in the House of Commons, and on appeals to the electors, but on the use of the personal predilections of the sovereign, a course of action which to a great degree was successful, because, for the moment, the wishes of the Queen harmonised with the feeling of her people.

The course of events from 1708 to 1710 as they affect Harley's life is clear, though it has been clouded by personal intrigues. The war had continued for a long time, and was rapidly becoming more and more unpopular. The Whigs knew that Marlborough and Godolphin must rely on them as long as they supported it, and they became in consequence bolder and more arrogant. They held the balance of power in the Cabinet, but with this they were not satisfied. They were constantly seeking for greater influence—and not unsuccessfully—as in 1709, when Lord Orford was placed at the head of the Board of Admiralty. The position of Godolphin had thus become extremely humiliating and altogether vexatious. Each success of the Whigs alienated the Queen more from the Lord Treasurer, producing inversely a greater need for personal expostulation with the sovereign, which still further served to throw her on the side of the Tories, who grew more confident as the knowledge of the increasing dislike of the Queen for the Whigs was spread by news-letters in country towns, and among the parsonages and manor-houses where the Dissenter was still called a knave. The hopes of the clergy manifestly increased as the day of triumph over Nonconformity and the Whigs seemed to be approaching, and the churches resounded with harangues animated with militant intolerance.[1]

[1] "Mr. Cornwall preached the same sermon before the judges at

Thus both in the country and at Court circumstances were surely tending to Godolphin's downfall. He had driven Harley from his Cabinet and into active opposition; tactful, watchful, and incessantly but quietly active, Harley now sounded one politician and now interviewed another, and he had a valuable ally by the side of the Queen. Thus supported by public feeling and the favour of the sovereign, his opportunity had come. By a combination of circumstances partly personal and partly public, some of his own making and some arising from the necessary evolution of events, he was carried to the summit of political power.

Among these personal and secondary causes the influence of Abigail Masham with the Queen was the most effective in raising Harley from opposition to office.

Abigail Hill, a first cousin of the Duchess of Marlborough, the daughter of an impoverished London merchant, had been placed by her powerful relative in the royal household. By good luck she became, about 1704, Bedchamber Woman to the Queen, and in 1707 married Samuel Masham, an official of the Court. From that moment the quarrel between the Duchess, jealous of the rising favourite, and her cousin began. It was not, how-

Salop with applause, the text, Psalms the 94th and 16th verse, 'Who will rise up for me against the evil doers, and who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?'"—R. Knight to R. Harley, 4th April 1710. *Harley Papers*, ii. 539.

ever, until after Harley's resignation in 1708 that Abigail Masham became a factor in politics.

She was Harley's cousin, and the Duchess of Marlborough has herself stated that she was the same relation to him as to her. But it was not until 1707 that the relationship appears to have been discovered by Harley — for he had then, wrote Addison, "found out" that she was his cousin. It was a most opportune discovery. It at once gave him more influence with the Queen than had any other statesman. Lady Masham—as she became in 1711 when her husband was created a peer—was not yet a power in politics, and her influence with the Queen arose not a little from the fact that she was simply the personal friend of the sovereign, and not a recognised ally of either party. Swift, with the enthusiasm for those whom he liked which was characteristic of him, said that she was a woman of "boldness and courage superior to her sex." This is a far too flattering description of an ordinary woman, not without some sagacity and tact, but whose chief virtue in the eyes of her mistress was that she did not bully her.

Pleasant in manner and good-natured, with considerable natural shrewdness, Abigail Masham had a real affection for the Queen, though it was often tinged with something akin to contempt: "I am very much afraid of my aunt's (Queen) conduct in her affairs, and all will come from her want of a

little ready money (courage); for hitherto, you know, the want of that has made her a most sad figure in the world. I shall be very glad to have your opinion upon things, that I may lay it before her; for that is all can be done. I trust in God and beg of Him to supply her, that she may not be so blinded, but save herself while it is in her power."[1] Such was her opinion of her sovereign in July 1708. As the Queen was more and more harassed by Godolphin, by Marlborough, and by the Duchess, it needed but little tact on the part of Mrs. Masham to become a confidante of Anne—while the waiting-woman in her turn relied on her newly found cousin. "I shall be very glad to have your opinion upon things, that I may lay it before her." The advice of a statesman conveyed through the agreeable medium of a young, pleasant, and straightforward lady-in-waiting, anxious for the happiness of her mistress, was a very different thing from the peevish complaints of Godolphin, the reluctant but masterful interposition of Marlborough, and the tantrums of his wife. Anne's woman's nature thus tended to Harley's success. At first the aim of these two persons may have been uncertain, but by the end of 1709 it had become clear. "I received yours by Mr. Davenant and also that by Mrs. Banks very safe, and desire I may not burn the first, till I have read it to my

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 499.

QUEEN ANNE

After a portrait by Michael Dahl in the National Portrait Gallery

friend (the Queen), who wants such good instructions; and though she has had the same advice last year, yet I think it cannot be too often repeated to one that shows so little courage and resolution as she has hitherto done. I have a great mind to go to London to see you before you leave that place, but shall not be able to compass that design till about the 24th of this month. As for you writing a letter for me to show my friend, you had better not do it, for I fear she will be afraid of being examined about it, so I dare answer she would much rather know nothing of the matter. I have often spoken to her about Lord T.'s office, but never could obtain a satisfactory answer. If I cannot be so happy to secure it for you, I won't attempt doing it myself."[1]

The object, therefore, which at that time Harley and Mrs. Masham had set themselves to obtain is clear—he was to become Lord Treasurer.

The most serious sign at the centre of affairs of the approaching fall of Godolphin was the dismissal of Sunderland on the 13th of June 1710—not only a leading Whig, but also the son-in-law of Marlborough. This decisive action could not fail to strike public attention; and it was very suggestive, for men could well remember how the coming domination of the Whigs over Godolphin and the unwilling Queen was signalised by the appoint-

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 524.

ment in 1708 of Sunderland as Secretary of State. Thus there was a peculiar irony in his fall which was a personal satisfaction to Harley and the Queen. Yet the first step was conducted with the tact which one would expect from Harley. Sunderland was known to be extremely obnoxious to the Queen, while his hot temper and arrogant manner made him little liked even by political friends. He could be dismissed without alarming the country and the monied men, especially the merchants of London, and without much regret being felt by his own party. He was succeeded by Lord Dartmouth, a judicious and amiable nobleman, whose appointment was intended to show the Queen's moderation, and to allay the fears of the large body of persons who hovered in opinion between the two sharply divided parties.

But all things tended in the same direction: the over-reaching claims of Marlborough, the impolitic trial of Sacheverell, the hostility of public opinion, especially of the High Churchmen, the unpopularity of the war, the personal position of Godolphin forcing him to be importunate with the Queen. These different political streams finally uniting, overwhelmed the Lord Treasurer. On the 8th of August 1710 he received by letter his dismissal from his Queen; on the same day Harley was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, and then became Prime Minister. That political term was then

almost unknown, but it alone expresses the absolutely dominating political position of Harley when he came into office. In the country he had been preparing the public for a change of Government, but, as before, he had been careful to demonstrate his unique position as a moderating politician. "Since I had the honour of seeing you," wrote the ubiquitous De Foe to him on the 28th of July 1710, "I can assure you by experience I find the acquainting some people they are not all to be devoured and eaten up, will have all the effect upon them could be wished for, assuring them that moderate counsels are at the bottom of all these things; that the old mad party are not coming in; that his Grace the Duke of Shrewsbury and yourself are at the head of the management, and that neither have been moved, however ill-treated, to forsake the principles you always served; that toleration, succession, or union are not struck at, and that they may be easy as to the nation's liberties."[1]

These were the principles of the Revolution, in other words, the principles of the Whig statesmen, whom Harley had just defeated, but they were the principles upon which Harley had acted in the past, and by which he was determined to be guided in the future. Yet he was taking office as the leader of the Tories, never more hot with animosity

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 552.

against the Nonconformists than at the moment when they had for their new leader one who was the son and grandson of rigid Puritans, and himself more in sympathy with a Baptist than a High Churchman. Harley's accession to power was an actual check not only to the present policy of the Whigs, but also to the unbounded ambitions and arrogance, the constantly increasing claims of the Whig chief, who by conmon action had obtained the control of an obedient and united Parliamentary party. His object had been secured by the combined action of the personal will of the sovereign and of popular feeling, aided by the most influential Tories, by whom he was regarded as the only leader who could bring them back to power. "No one," wrote Bolingbroke to him soon after the triumph of the Whigs in 1708, "is able to do so much as you towards removing our present evils."[1] We cannot, however, too clearly remember that in each of the two capital events of Harley's political career—his defeat by the Whigs in 1708 and his triumph in 1710—more powerful than intrigue or personal ambitions was the force of popular opinion.

[1] Longleat MSS., Hist. MSS. Com., p. 193. See also p. 191: "You broke the party; unite it again."

CHAPTER VI

PRIME MINISTER

1710–1714

HARLEY'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE WHIG JUNTO—THE POSITION OF HALIFAX—HARLEY FORMS A TORY CABINET—CONTRAST BETWEEN HARLEY AND BOLINGBROKE—INTRODUCTION OF SWIFT TO HARLEY—ERASMUS LEWIS—SWIFT AND HARLEY—THE RELATIONS OF MARLBOROUGH AND HARLEY—THE CONCLUSION OF PEACE THE OBJECT OF HARLEY'S POLICY—GUISCARD'S ATTEMPT ON HARLEY'S LIFE—HARLEY CREATED EARL OF OXFORD AND APPOINTED LORD TREASURER—NEGOTIATIONS WITH FRANCE—MARLBOROUGH OPPOSES HARLEY'S POLICY—THE GOVERNMENT DEFEATED IN THE LORDS ON THE ADDRESS—TEMPORARY ALLIANCE OF HIGH CHURCH TORIES AND WHIGS—BILL AGAINST OCCASIONAL CONFORMITY CARRIED—DE FOE'S SUGGESTION TO DEFEAT IT—THE POLITICAL CRISIS—HARLEY'S CONFIDENCE—THE CREATION OF PEERS—1711 AND 1832—DISMISSAL OF MARLBOROUGH—TRIUMPH OF HARLEY—THE RESTRAINING ORDERS—CONCLUSION OF PEACE.

HARLEY had no sooner attained to supreme power in 1710, than, acting on those principles of moderation which he was always endeavouring to follow, he sought to induce Somers, Cowper, Halifax, and other Whigs to take office in his Administration. The negotiations between Halifax and Somers on the one hand and Harley on the other continued to the end of the year 1711,[1]

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 108, 115, 120.

Halifax being apparently the chief mover in them. Though they had no result, the relations of the two statesmen were throughout the continuance of the new Administration singularly cordial and confidential. The position of Halifax differed from that of the other Whig chiefs. During part of the reign of William III., from 1692 to 1699, he had held a remarkable place in the State and in the House of Commons, and as Chancellor of the Exchequer he had achieved unexampled success. Fallen from office, and disappointed, he had during Godolphin's Ministry failed to obtain any high employment. This exclusion from power undoubtedly was a constant grievance to him, and from 1710 to the fall of Harley's Ministry Halifax was unquestionably hopeful of forming some kind of coalition with Harley, the friend of his youth and of his manhood. Each was keenly interested in the national finances, and both, though each differed on two cardinal points of policy from his party, found in them a common political bond. For both agreed in the desire for religious toleration, and both were sincerely anxious for peace between France and England, though at one time they disagreed on its terms. Yet each was so bound to the party to which he belonged, that it was impossible for them openly to coalesce; and warm and confidential as was their private union, Halifax ultimately became a member of the Administration which impeached his lifelong

CHARLES MONTAGUE, EARL OF HALIFAX, K.G.

From a portrait by Sir Godfrey Kneller in the National Portrait Gallery

friend. The negotiations, however, with the Whig chiefs at least showed Harley's moderation to many who, especially in London and the larger towns, were watching the change of Government with apprehension and anxiety, and they indicated that the new Minister did not intend abruptly to end the policy of the late Ministry. They thus served a useful purpose, perhaps as much as Harley hoped or intended, though they did not result in a political union. The Prime Minister would willingly have leavened a Tory Ministry if he could, and some of the minor Whig officials retained their offices; but the chief places in the Government had to be filled with Tories, and therefore between the dissolution of one Parliament on 21st September and the meeting of another on 25th November, the new Administration had become wholly Tory. Henry St. John, who had retired with Harley in 1708, returned to office as the one of the two Secretaries of State more particularly concerned with the conduct of foreign affairs; Harcourt,[1] who repre-

[1] Simon Harcourt, 1661(?)–1727, was the only son of Sir Philip Harcourt of Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire. He was at school at Shelton with Robert Harley, and went subsequently to Oxford, and in 1683 was called to the Bar. In 1688, Harcourt succeeded to the family estates, and in 1690 became member for Abingdon. He subsequently took a leading part in the House of Commons, and in 1707 became Attorney General, but resigned office with Harley in 1708. He defended Sacheverell in 1710—at that time being without a seat in the House of Commons. After a further short period of office as Attorney General, he was appointed Lord Keeper of the Great Seal in Harley's Ministry, and on 3rd September 1711

sented not only Tory lawyers but Tory squires, became, after an interval of office as Lord Keeper, Lord Chancellor, and Dartmouth retained the other Secretaryship of State. Harley himself was at first only Chancellor of the Exchequer, but in May of the following year he was appointed to the supreme office of Lord Treasurer, having a week before been created Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer.

From the very beginning of his administration its policy was wholly directed by himself and St. John—they were as yet friends, Harley still the "dear Master to his Harry."

It has not been altogether fortunate for Harley's fame that he should have had a colleague so brilliant as Bolingbroke, one so entirely his opposite and with so striking a personality.

"The Earl of Oxford is an indefatigable man of business, of a lively and aspiring spirit, and manages the caballing parties with that dexterity that he keeps in with both. It was his good fortune to understand how to improve the indiscreet blunders of the late Ministry to his own purpose, by using the Queen with all duty and respect imaginable, while they used her with

he was created a peer by the title of Baron Harcourt. In September 1714 he was dismissed from office by George I. He died in London on 29th July 1727. Harcourt was neither a learned lawyer nor an eminent statesman, but he had a great reputation as a speaker.

contempt; and while he was concerned with the public affairs asked nothing contrary to her pleasure and good liking, whereby he engrossed to himself all her favour and esteem, and by his smooth tongue and winning mien got so great an ascendant over her that he has her approbation of all that he does, so that he now steers the helm of state with as great sway as ever Richelieu or Mazarin did in France; and to fix himself faster therein he has introduced persons (in a manner) subservient to him, some of low birth and small fortune, but good parts, and others of good birth and great fortune, but without experience and of indifferent parts."[1]

Such was the description of Harley which Prince Eugène gave to the Court of Vienna after his mission to England in 1712. It may well be compared with the better-known sketch of Bolingbroke which Swift has left us—

"I think Mr. St. John the greatest young man I ever knew, with capacity, beauty, quickness of apprehension, good learning, and an excellent taste; the best orator in the House of Commons, admirable conversation, good nature and good manners; generous, and a despiser of money, the only fault is talking with friends in way of complaint of too

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 157.

great a level of business which looks a little like affectation; and he endeavours too much to mix the fine gentleman and man of pleasure with the man of business."[1]

In his gifts as an orator and a writer, in his versatility and his social gaiety, Bolingbroke was the antithesis of his chief—a halting speaker, a parliamentary archæologist, a collector not a maker of books, and whose letters are as involved as Bolingbroke's are clear. In his domestic life Harley was as irreproachable as Bolingbroke was irregular.

As a politician, Bolingbroke, who was every inch a cultivated aristocrat, was without principles or scruples, full of vanity and ambition. Harley, on the contrary, a type of the common-sense Englishman of the upper middle class, held and acted on fixed ideas of political conduct, but was unfitted for a party leader in a national crisis. Strangely enough, while Bolingbroke, a pronounced free thinker, ultimately became the head of the High Church section, Harley, who was now chief of the Tory party, was a friend of the Dissenters, and was more in sympathy with the opinions of his opponents than with those of whom he was the leader. He was the most unassuming of men, and for many years led a laborious public life rather

[1] *Journal*, 3rd November 1711.

from a love of practical work than from the desire of personal distinction. From temperament and from an accurate perception of the varying feeling of the country, trained by the observation of a constant volume of information collected by trustworthy subordinates, he sought to steer a course which would give him the support of the moderate men of both parties, and of that large mass of the people who desire peace and prosperity without regard to party fortunes. A Whig in principle, he was always endeavouring to moderate the actions of the Tory High-flyers and never to press harshly on the Nonconformists. How difficult and indeed impossible such an ideal of political conduct was when reduced to practice in such an age as that in which Harley lived, his fortunes sufficiently show. How it involved him in double dealing is equally clear. And yet it was an object for which there was much to be said, and which in other times might not have been impossible of success.

It has been told how Harley and De Foe became acquainted; in 1710 the friendship between Harley and Swift began, which was ended only by death. In that year Swift returned from Ireland to the centre of political affairs in London. Disappointed with the Whigs, he arrived in England as the change of Government was in process of completion, anxious to settle once for all the long

outstanding question of the Irish first-fruits.[1] Never a thorough believer in the policy of the Whigs, it is not surprising that he turned to those who were now in the ascendant. He was promised an interview with Harley, and on 4th October he was introduced to him by Erasmus Lewis. This useful person never rendered Harley a better service than when he made Swift personally known to him. It is the natural fate of many who have had an important but unseen influence on public affairs, and on the actions of eminent public men, to pass into oblivion. Lewis was one of those persons who move silently behind the scenes, influencing events but unknown to the world. Though his counsel had great weight with the Tory leaders, he has been almost forgotten. His career, however, is noteworthy and interesting. Born in 1670 in the Vale of Towy, he obtained a scholarship at Westminster and thence proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge. After living for some years in Germany, he became—about 1700—Secretary to

[1] Swift had come over to England in 1708 empowered by the Archbishop of Dublin on behalf of the Irish clergy, to obtain for them a remission of the first-fruits and tenths—the first whole year's profit of a preferment and one-tenth of the subsequent annual profits—which were paid to the Crown. In England these payments had been granted to the clergy by charter, confirmed by statute in 1703 (2 & 3 Anne, c. 11), and formed the fund then and since known as Queen Anne's Bounty. Swift had several interviews with Godolphin, the Earl of Pembroke, and other Ministers on the subject, and was at length assured that the Queen had made the grant. But he had to return to Ireland in 1709 much vexed at the business being still uncompleted.

JONATHAN SWIFT

From a portrait by Charles Jervas in the National Portrait Gallery

Lord Macclesfield, then Ambassador in Paris, after whose recall in 1701 Lewis appears to have fallen to the prosaic position of a schoolmaster at Carmarthen. By some means he became known to Harley, who, with his usual insight into character, appointed him in May 1704 one of his secretaries. His fortune was now assured. Hard-working, judicious, and agreeable, he became an invaluable assistant to Harley. After the fall of his chief, he was given, in 1709, the place of Under-Secretary of State, a post he continued to hold throughout Harley's Administration. When the Whigs came into power in 1714, Lewis' official career ended, but Harley, with his customary kindness, appointed him his steward, chiefly, one may think, for the purpose of paying him a salary. For Lewis transacted very little business, and lived thenceforward an easy, agreeable life, now visiting in this house and now in that, playing ombre with the ladies and gossiping with the men. He had reached the mature age of fifty-four before he married, when, with his usual prudence, he selected a well-to-do widow lady no younger than himself. A typical permanent official, he was the business man of that coterie of men of letters and statesmen with whom Harley foregathered; the judicious friend of Swift and Prior, of Parnell and Pope, of Arbuthnot and Gay, he outlived them all, not dying till the age of eighty-three, in 1754.

This, then, was the man who initiated the famous friendship between Harley and Swift.

"To-day," says Swift in the *Journal to Stella*, "I was brought privately to Mr. Harley, who received me with the greatest respect and kindness imaginable." The gift of accurate perception of efficient subordinates was always a marked feature in Harley's character. "He was seldom mistaken in his judgment of men," says Swift himself, "and therefore not apt to change a good or ill opinion by the representation of others." This quality was never more clearly shown than by the rapid unreserve of his immediate and close intercourse with Swift; his treatment of him was masterly, indicative of his keen insight into men's characters, for he received him with a frankness and a friendship, unlike his usual reserve, thus at once winning the permanent confidence and goodwill of a man who was not only at the moment irritated by want of success in his negotiations with the Whigs, but was to the last degree sensitive and proud. Harley possessed the rare power of attaching some men to him by a tie of personal affection. Swift, Prior, and Erasmus Lewis remained for years friends as much as fellow-workers; to retain their confidence is sufficient evidence that there were traits in Harley's nature more admirable than were apparent to many of his contemporaries.

The time which followed this introduction was

certainly the happiest part of Swift's life; it had its anxieties and its cares, but he was hopeful for the future, and his ambition was for the moment gratified in a way to which he could a short time before never in his most sanguine hours have looked forward. For his influence, as he well knew, and as every one took care to inform him, was felt both by the public and by the Government. No one but a Cabinet Minister was ever so near the centre of affairs, and no one enjoyed more keenly the excitement of political warfare, or appreciated more the consideration which his unique position caused him to receive. Every one, from an ambassador to a literary hack, sought his assistance. To a man of Swift's temperament, the retrospect in after years of that singular time, and of his share in memorable events, was enough to cause a career more agreeable than that of an Irish Dean engaged in letters and in political controversy, to appear flat, unprofitable, and wholly disappointing.

From the first the relations of Harley and Swift were very cordial, marked by an agreeable and social kindness on the part of the statesman, by a varied enjoyment in which personal dignity was never lost on the part of the man of letters. Harley was always ready to listen, and to appreciate Swift's views on the affairs of the nation. "His mind," wrote Lewis in 1713, "has been

communicated more fully to you than any one else," while Swift on his side stated his opinions to the Minister with a frankness which never for a moment interrupted the personal friendship of the two men—"in your public capacity," he wrote in 1714, "you have often angered me to the heart, but as a private man never once."

Swift soon got to work for his new friends, and from November 1710 until the following June he wrote a weekly essay in the *Examiner*,—which had lately been established by Bolingbroke. He avowed himself to be a Tory, but yet a reasonable, honest man who hated "mad, ridiculous extremes." His essays were admirable advocacy; they appealed to the common sense of his reader, placing him on good terms with himself. He glided over weak places with so much art, and his strong points emerged so naturally, while every line was illuminated by a delightful vitality, that whether he was defending the change of Ministry, the treatment of Marlborough, or the negotiations with France, the person who perused his writings insensibly found himself a stronger Tory than the author. The famous pamphlets which followed—*The Conduct of the Allies* and *Remarks on the Barrier Treaty*—for the same reasons were equally effective.

Harley's accession to power necessarily brought him again into close connection with Marlborough,

but their relations were different from those of four years before, when Marlborough was chiefly instrumental in bringing him into high office. Fundamentally they were, and had always been, in agreement in regard to English parties. To Marlborough, Whig and Tory were "detested names," to Harley they were significant of "party tyranny." If Marlborough and Harley could have dispensed with party support, the one for the conduct of the war, the other for the retention of office, they might have remained on terms of political and personal friendship.

It was long before Marlborough could be persuaded to take up a position hostile to Harley, and it was only when he thought that the Lord Treasurer and the Tories were likely to hinder his opportunities as a soldier, that he was willing to take actively the side of the Whigs. But by the time that Harley was placed in office by the Queen in 1710, Marlborough's friendship had turned to dislike. "He will continue by the army," he writes to the Duchess in October 1710, when the new Parliament was being elected. And he continues, "I detest Mr. Harley, but think I have lived long enough in the world to be able to distinguish between reason and faction." Years before he had written to his wife, "I meddle with no business but what belongs to the army." It was vexation at the hindrance which Harley, whom he now rightly

associated with the Tory party, would be to him as a general, that had caused his change of opinion; it was disappointment and weariness at the party battles which to him seemed so unreasonable, so unnecessary, and so childish; it was regret at the loss of Godolphin, who had so strenuously aided him at home.

In many respects Harley was in exactly the same frame of mind, but from an opposite point of view. John Drummond, who had long been his confidential agent in Holland, wrote to him on the 11th of November 1710—

"All the weak arguments which I can produce can be but of little influence if matters be otherwise fixed and a scheme laid by which that great man is to lose his command, and I only should reason in the dark if I pretended to give the best reasons I am capable of on that subject, and therefore as to a reconciliation I should think it nowise impracticable if there were a real inclination to it on both sides, and that it be the Queen's intention. The true way to begin it is by a mutual complaisance, and I could wish there were no dispute who was to begin and make the first advances. I think a faithful, honest man who had no by-end, and in whom both had some confidence, might by a mutual consent of both parties break ground, and try by one or two preliminary points whether

there were hopes of succeeding in an entire treaty. I am confident you would strengthen your party more by gaining that one man than by any other thing imaginable, and I believe he is sensible of the intolerable measures which others encouraged him to go into. I know he hates some of their leaders very heartily, and I believe he would abandon his old friend so far as never to desire to have him in play again, but let him lie by the rest of his days. I am also persuaded he would part with any one or all of the damnation club for their ill-behaviour; but these may be conjectures, and cannot be well known till they are proposed. I know this would be insupportable doctrine to Lord Rivers and the Duke of Argyll, whom I both honour, love, and esteem; but as no private man's interest ought or must come in computation with the present welfare of the public, and to get honourably rid of this bloody, pernicious, expensive, and destructive war, neither any private pique ought to prevail so far as to hinder or any wise encourage the enemy not to renew their proposals for a peace, which the Dutch I am sure, and very sure, want but to have in a manner on any terms; and if ever proposed, if they don't come to a conclusion as well as they can, I shall never pretend to know anything of them or their measures for the future, and we are in no worse circumstances than when the enemy made their last proposals.

We have gained two battles in Spain and four strong towns in Flanders, and the like success another campaign must bring us upon the territories of old France.

"What is it, are we to imagine, that hinders or will hinder their new proposals, but what they write us every day, viz. the hopes they have of the divisions in England, and that the Duke of Marlborough will be made so uneasy as to be obliged to retire and abandon the army, who they know has been no less instrumental in keeping the Allies together as in his success in the field. It is not for his person, but for the public good that I argue or presume to meddle in so important an affair, for well do I know all his vices as well as his virtues, and I know as well that though his covetousness has gained him much reproach and ill-will on this side of the world, yet his success in the field, his capacity or rather dexterity in council or in the Cabinet, and his personal acquaintance with the heads of the Alliance and the faith they have in him, make him still the great man with them, and on whom they depend. I can tell you with certainty what I meet in daily conversation: that you will have little money to expect from this if he stay at home; that they wish with all their hearts almost any sort of peace before he be taken from them; that there is no Englishman who they have any opinion for the command of an army

but himself; that his agreeing so well with Prince Eugène is one of their greatest contentments, and to make a new acquaintance and intimacy of such a nature with any one what they fear and abhor the thoughts of."[1]

To this sensible and clear expostulation Harley replied by thanking Drummond for having written "so plain, so prudently, and with so much affection," then he continued—

"As to any reconciliation between me and the (Duke of Marlborough), give me leave to say that I were unworthy the Queen's service should I not live with any one that her service or the public good requires. I do solemnly assure you I have not the least resentment towards him or any one else. I thank God my mind puts me above that. I never did revenge injuries, and never will sacrifice the public quiet to my own resentment. I believe there is not one here thinks I retain any revenge, but have given many instances (of for) giving and forgetting very great injuries. I (have) scarce used the common caution of doing anything *se defendendo*, for fear it should be thought to be the effect of resentment. In one word, I do assure you I can live and act with the Duke now in the same manner and with the same easiness as the

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 620.

first day that ever I saw him; and that you may be convinced this is my temper and not words only, I must tell you some things which have passed since April last, and many more I could add. . . . But this I find by experience, those who have done injuries are more difficult to be reconciled than those who have received injuries; and hatred, the more groundless and unreasonable it is, the more durable and violent it most times proves. Now I have opened to you my heart upon this subject, and do again assure you that no resentment of mine shall ever obstruct the public service or hinder the co-operating with any one for the good of the common cause."[1]

This letter was communicated to Marlborough, and it produced a determination on the part of the Duke to act with the new Ministry. "He has faithfully promised," wrote Drummond on the 9th December 1710, "that he is resolved to live with you, if you will make it practicable or possible for him; he will not enter into the heat of party details, but will go heartily and sincerely into all the measures that may be esteemed proper for carrying on the war."[2] The interview was long, and much more was said to the same effect, all ending in the one fact that, to use Drummond's phrase, the Duke was prepared "to live" with

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 623.

[2] *Harley Papers*, ii. 634.

Harley's Ministry. In the previous October Marlborough had told the Duchess of his fear lest peace should "give power and strength to Mr. Harley, the Queen, and Mrs. Masham to vex me and those I wish well to." This compromise, therefore, at first could not be cordial, but, for the time being, a reconciliation was as necessary for Marlborough as it was for Harley; neither could dispense, if he would, with the other. For private reasons Marlborough was anxious to continue on good terms with Harley, for he had set his heart on the completion of his house at Blenheim, which was being built at the public expense. Harley assured him that the work should be pushed on, and so Marlborough in the summer of 1711 was satisfied with "his friendship and good offices."[1] On Harley, in place of Godolphin, Marlborough had to depend to supply the pay of the army, and the subsidies of the allies. Marlborough, without doubt, was the only man who could achieve success in the field and manage the troublesome and heterogeneous forces which were under his command. If Harley had desired to dismiss the Duke from his high position, which he certainly did not—for no one recognised more clearly Marlborough's genius as a soldier—it was at present impossible. Thus the official relations of the two men continued amicable. Harley communi-

[1] Longleat MSS., Hist. MSS. Com., pp. 203, 205.

cated with him fully on the financial requisites of the allied forces; Marlborough had as heretofore a free hand in the conduct of the campaign. During the first few months of his administration Harley was therefore in the position of a war minister; he had to continue the task which Godolphin had undertaken, and it was his first object to show that though men were changed the foreign policy of the Cabinet was unaltered. John Drummond, by Harley's orders, told his friends at Amsterdam "that the gentlemen now employed by the Queen were as hearty for the Revolution as any in England, that they are firm Protestants, that they are uninterested, that they have good land estates to lose which they cannot remove, that the change of Ministers had made no change of measures as to the common cause, unless it were in being more hearty and expeditious, more frugal of the nation's money, and more in earnest for a speedy and reasonable peace."[1]

In the last sentence of the letter, we see the real purpose of Harley's policy.[2] He had to attain a single and very definite object—he had to end the war.

As soon as a Ministry comes into power, much is

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 639.

[2] The Plan of Administration, dated 30th October 1710 (*Hardwicke State Papers*, ii. 485), has little importance as an indication of Harley's policy and principles; it is scarcely more than a memorandum on some details of party management.

expected of it, and if something capable of popular appreciation is not quickly accomplished a reaction ensues. It was impossible for Harley's policy to produce the desired results at once, and in the beginning of 1711 Harley appeared to be losing popularity. By a mere accident he was suddenly and extraordinarily strengthened. A broken-down Frenchman named Guiscard, who for many years had been a mere adventurer—sometimes a soldier, sometimes a diplomatist, and more often a spy—was being examined on 11th March 1711 at Whitehall before the Privy Council. He was receiving an allowance from the Government, and this by Harley's direction had been reduced; discovered to be in treasonable communication with France, he had been arrested by Bolingbroke's orders. In the middle of his examination he stabbed Harley with a small knife. The wound in itself did not prove serious, but it produced a grave constitutional disturbance, and for the time this rather theatrical attempt on his life gave Harley an extraordinary emotional popularity. Addresses and letters of congratulation on his escape and his recovery from the wound poured in to him from all parts of the country, and every writer of verse addressed to him an ode in which his life was declared to be necessary for the salvation of England. To the influence arising from his mastery of parliamentary details was now added

a personal and a popular sympathy. "I hear," writes one of Harley's daughters to her aunt, Abigail Harley, describing his reception by the House of Commons after his recovery, "the Speaker made a very fine speech. My father was received in a very extraordinary manner; there was not one in the House but what took occasion to make their compliments to him, and crowded about him. The House was very full." Favoured by the sympathy of the nation and his sovereign, Harley was on the 23rd of May raised to the peerage as Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer, and on the 29th was advanced to the high dignity of Lord Treasurer. Thus again, whilst giving due credit to Harley for his many considerable qualities, we yet see him singularly assisted by comparatively trivial circumstances. He returned to his task renewed in political strength by an event in itself of no importance.

It was now essential for his policy that decided progress should at once be made towards the conclusion of a peace with France. "We must have peace, be it a bad or a good one," wrote Swift in the previous March; the necessity for it on financial and popular grounds was now still more urgent. In the beginning of 1711 informal *pourparlers* had commenced between Louis and the Ministry through the agency of the Abbé Gaultier, who, after being chaplain to Marshal Tallard during his

Embassy to England, had stayed in London on the same mission for the French Government as De Foe fulfilled in Scotland for Harley. These confidential communications were interrupted by Harley's wound and illness, but in April Gaultier for the second time returned to England, bringing more precise but yet vague terms from Louis. The negotiations, if such indeed they can be called, now—Harley being convalescent—took a more practical and active turn. But the Allies could not be altogether passed over, and on Gaultier's return in April a communication was made to the Dutch Ministers, in which these vague terms from France were transmitted. The answer, as might be expected, was a request for further particulars. But affairs were growing too important to be entrusted to a man like Gaultier, who by his mode of life was inclined to place too much value on gossip and second-hand news. It was decided to send Prior to Paris, and so he departed on the 1st of July from that remarkable and agreeable society of politicians and men of letters which gathered round the Court of Anne. His mission, kept secret even from one who was on such confidential terms with Harley as Swift, concealed too from the Dutch, resulted in the conclusion of the preliminaries of peace on the 27th of September.

Of these negotiations with France Marlborough was kept wholly ignorant. It was not until Sep-

tember that an inquiry from him elicited from Harley a reply entirely couched in generalities, and giving no details of the important steps which were being taken in the direction of peace. Marlborough reiterated his wish for a speedy end of the war; some months later he expressed the same desire to the Lord Treasurer in still stronger terms.

In October, Marlborough stated that he was satisfied with everything Harley had done; but on his return to England later in the month his attitude changed. On the Continent he could act on his own opinion; at home he was strongly influenced by his wife, by Godolphin, and the Whigs, and he was persuaded by them to become actively hostile to Harley. He could not object to peace, but he could oppose the proposed terms, which was for practical purposes the same thing; and so he remonstrated personally with the Queen against the preliminaries. This step alone was sufficient to place the Ministry in direct conflict with him. Marlborough never braced himself to these remonstrances with the Queen willingly, but the self-confidence of the Whigs did not allow them to see the danger of such an open attack on Harley. On December the 7th, Parliament met, and in the speech from the Throne spoken by the Queen herself she said that "notwithstanding the acts of those who delight in war, both time

JOHN CHURCHILL, DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH

From a portrait by Sir Godfrey Kneller in the National Portrait Gallery

and place are appointed for opening the treaty of a general peace." These decisive words were a clear warning to the Whigs that Harley and the Queen were not to be driven from the policy which they had laid down for themselves.

But an alliance had been arranged which, as an instance of political immorality, can hardly be matched in the annals of our party system. So hostile were the Whigs to the foreign policy of the Government, that, to obtain the assistance of some of the dissatisfied and more bigoted Tories, they consented to support a Bill similar to the measures against Occasional Conformity, which had so often during the last ten years been brought into Parliament. The principles of this measure they had always successfully opposed; to support it was to act against the political convictions by which they had hitherto been guided. The result of this alliance, from which the Whigs hoped so much—"it is Dismal who will save England at last,"[1] said Wharton, the chief manager of the party, speaking of Nottingham by the name by which from his melancholy countenance he was called alike by friends and foes—was quickly seen. Nottingham at once moved to add a clause to the address to the effect that no peace would be safe or honourable which left the West Indies and Spain in the hands of the House of Bourbon.

[1] *Journal to Stella*, 5th December 1711.

It was carried, with Marlborough's support, against the Government by a majority of 64 to 52.[1] But the same clause was rejected in the House of Commons by a large majority—232 against 106.[2] The figures in both Houses are important, for they show with the utmost plainness that Harley was backed by the House of Commons and was certain of popular support.

So far, indeed, from weakening the resolution of the Ministry, this action of the House of Lords strengthened Harley and Bolingbroke in their determination to conclude peace with France, even if the terms of it, though satisfactory to Great Britain, should not be approved by her allies. For in the tactics of the opposition the Ministers perceived the result of intrigues between the Dutch Minister Buys, Bothmar, the representative of Hanover, and the Whig leaders—"the General (Marlborough) and the foreign Ministers have united to blow up this which will turn upon themselves," wrote Harley to Lord Strafford[3] on the day after the memorable division. Some justification therefore existed for separate negotiations between England and France, and in the famous restraining orders to which allusion will presently

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, vi. 1039.

[2] *Parl. Hist.*, vi. 1043.

[3] Bolingbroke to Lord Strafford, 8th December 1711; and Harley to Lord Strafford, of same date.—*Bolingbroke's Corresp.*, edited by Parke.

be made, we see the counter-move of Harley and Bolingbroke to the manœuvre of the Dutch.

The policy of the Whigs was singularly stupid; it promised as the sequel to splendid victories, nothing but an indefinite continuance of the war. They lost sight of the changed state of affairs on the Continent and in England. The Emperor Joseph had died, and Charles of Austria, the candidate of the Allies for the Spanish throne, was the new Emperor; at the same time Louis of Anjou, the nephew of the French King, was *de facto* King of Spain. The Allies had no one to put in his place, for the union of the Empire and the throne of Spain was admittedly impossible. Apart from the jealousies it would create, it threatened that balance of power which was ever in the minds of the statesmen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To seek for another candidate was to open the door to intrigue, and to create dissensions among all the continental powers. Above all, the power of the French King was broken and humbled, and the majority of the English people perceived that he had ceased to be a menace to European peace, and to what they valued above all, the principles of the Revolution of 1688. Year after year enormous sums had been raised for the purposes of the continually recurring campaigns, and the policy of Harley was the only one which gave the least hope of

the cessation of this drain on the manhood and the resources of England, the "packhorse of the war."[1]

The first move in the alliance of the Whigs and dissatisfied Tories having been apparently successful, the second had now to take place; and so on the 15th of December 1711 the Bill against Occasional Conformity was introduced by Nottingham into the House of Lords, and presently passed both Houses without opposition.[2] The action of the Whigs has been excused by Mr. Lecky on the ground that as the Bill had three times been passed by the House of Commons, and as the country had been shown to be on the side of the High Church party, the Lords should not have put a permanent veto on the measure. But the Whig peers were certainly guided by no such academic constitutionalism, as De Foe among others plainly perceived, and had they been actuated by the modern democratic theories which have been ascribed to them,[3] they would not have opposed the Ministry, the House of Commons, and the nation in their desire to conclude peace. The Bill was one contrary to every principle which Harley valued, and it may therefore be asked how it came to pass unopposed. The answer is obvious. However personally distasteful this measure might be to the Lord Treasurer, he did

[1] Lord Strafford to Electress Sophia, Stowe MS., p. 224.
[2] *Parl. Hist.*, vi. 1046. [3] Lecky, *History of England*, i. 94.

not dare to lose the support of his party by opposing it, even if opposition under the circumstances could have been effectual, which it certainly would not, for the political treachery of the Whigs made the Bill sure to become law. Nor from some points of view could Harley pretend to regret that this question so perpetually arising should be set at rest, at least for a time; for the passing of this Bill removed a subject from parliamentary discussion on which it was impossible for him to act without offending either his Tory supporters or his Dissenting friends. De Foe, overlooking this aspect of the matter, and eager in the cause of toleration, suggested to Harley a bold way to destroy the Bill.

"I confess myself," he writes, "so much surprised with the particulars which your Lordship did me the honour to communicate to me on Tuesday of the conduct of a set of men with respect to the Dissenters, that I could not express myself on several things needful to be observed to you on the occasion, which defect, according to the freedom you are pleased to allow me, I supply in this manner.

"And first, in the midst of my real and just concern for the interest of the Dissenters, which I look upon as ruined, I cannot but look up with thankfulness in your behalf that the mouths of

your enemies are most effectually stopped in offering to lay the reproach of their disaster upon your Lordship, which is most apparently the effect of an implacable, but I hope impotent, aversion to you, and of a manifest resolution to injure and insult you. Had it not been too late to retrieve the injury, I should have rejoiced also in behalf of the Dissenters, that the idols they adored have appeared capable of so mean a step as to sell the party that ventured their safety on the leaky bottom of a supposed zeal, into perpetual Tory bondage to form a new interest for the supporting their party designs; but this joy is like singing a psalm at a funeral, too sad to be sonorous.

"As you have for the sake of a little sincerity borne with a great deal of coarse and unpolished plainness from me, indulging a freedom which I have no title to but from your own goodness, so I beg you to bear with one humble motion in behalf of an interest which I know your Lordship has been a patron of, which has been valued by you, and which, though the usage of some of the people to you has been inexcusable, yet I am fully persuaded you have still at heart; I mean that of the Dissenters.

"There remains but one point between them and the fate of their whole cause, viz. Her Majesty passing or not passing the Bill. I know the negative is not without its hazard, and many watch the

advantage. But Her Majesty has solemnly passed her royal promise to the Dissenters to preserve the toleration inviolable. I know my duty too well to enter on any argument on the consistency of passing this Bill with the keeping this promise, yet I could not satisfy myself, neither in duty to the Dissenters' interest or the immediate interest of your Lordship, without humbly moving you in this case, viz. how effectually it would bind to your interest, and to Her Majesty's person and Government and to all your just measures, the whole body of the Dissenters, and Low Churchmen also, who are as ill-pleased as any; how effectually it would bring in those very people who have suffered this chicane of a party to be passed upon them, and are raging with shame and confusion at what they have done; how effectually it would rivet your Lordship in the hearts of all good men, silence past unjust clamours, and powerfully establish your Lordship as the protector of liberty, the patron of justice, and the true refuge of an injured people—all this, I firmly believe, with a blessing from Heaven, would be the consequence, if Her Majesty, in maintenance of her sacred promise aforesaid, may be advised to refuse this Bill.

"God Almighty give your Lordship wisdom and counsel from Himself to direct in an affair of so nice but important consequences, so as may issue in His glory, your own blessing, and an

innocent people's deliverance; asking pardon for this freedom."[1]

This advice was far too drastic even for a bolder man than Harley to follow, but we like De Foe all the better for giving it.

Harley's policy was now to combat the active and deadly hostility of the Whigs by action equally resolute. The Commissioners who had been appointed to investigate the charges brought against Marlborough of illegally appropriating public monies to his own use, were ordered by the House of Commons instantly to report their proceedings. This report—very adverse to the Duke, and in parts unjust—was amply sufficient for the purposes of the Ministry.

Yet all this time the exultation of the Whigs was unbounded, while the Tories were correspondingly depressed. Even those who were most favourable to the Ministry foretold its fall: the Queen was false to it, the Duchess of Somerset had gained so large an influence over her that Harley's period of power was nearly ended—such sayings were in the mouths of those who frequented Westminster and Kensington, while Bolingbroke, Swift, and Lewis, each a representative of a different section of the Tory party, were at one moment hopeful, at another so depressed that they could think of

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 130.

nothing but the best arrangements to make in view of the imminent victory of the Whigs.

In this feverish excitement, amid these hopes and fears, Harley went about his business with a quiet confidence which surprised those who met him. "All will be well," he said to incredulous hearers. No one knew his plans, every one tried to guess his schemes, while the half-contemptuous and half-humorous reticence which marked his manner vexed and perplexed his friends. At last the blow fell, and on 30th December the Duke of Marlborough was dismissed, and twelve new peers were created. Harley had thus again a majority in the House of Lords on which he could now depend. The crisis was at an end, the Tories were once more firmly fixed in power; it was the supreme and most striking moment of Harley's political life.

If we look at these facts dispassionately, it is clear that Harley was fully justified in his action at this time.

No one perceived more clearly than he the general desire of the English people—even of the English soldiers—for peace with France, daily more conscious as they were of the burdens and distresses of the never-ending European campaigns. No one saw more accurately that the outbreak of popular enthusiasm for the Church of England, which had had apparently so important and so adverse an influence on Godolphin's position just

before he fell, was one of those evanescent, though striking, expressions of popular feeling, the importance of which is easily overrated. Religious conflicts evoke passion in a high degree, and priestly enthusiasm can always raise some following. But that these movements are not necessarily lasting or deep, the fleeting popularity of Sacheverell shows. The populace joined in the movement which this hot-headed divine did so much to stimulate, not little because it was the easiest and most ready means of showing their present discontent with and their objection to the Ministry which happened to be in power. The mob which shouted for Sacheverell cared little that the Church of England should be *pulchra, suavis et decora.* Blinded by their desire for the supremacy of the Church, Atterbury and the clergy who followed him imagined that the people were in favour of the divine right of kings, a doctrine which, as has been well said, was in itself a condemnation of the Revolution. At a later date—on the death of the Queen—the tranquillity with which the change of sovereign was received showed how little real support the High Churchmen had in the country—a fact which no one perceived more clearly than the Lord Treasurer, who realised that the true force of the hostility to Godolphin's Ministry was the national desire for peace.

Marlborough having definitely and deliberately

allied himself with the Whigs in opposition to Harley's policy, his disgrace had become a political necessity. If we regard his weakness in connection with money matters, it appears so trivial in comparison with his splendid military services, that it is not surprising that some have said he fell a victim to faction and to national ingratitude. But if Harley had not taken this decisive step, would the Peace of Utrecht have been signed? He could act as he did because he was strong by reason of his knowledge of the temper of the country, and because he was certain that he was supported by the people and by the Queen. In converting a Whig majority in the House of Lords into a minority by a measure so drastic as the creation of a number of new peers, he was acting as the champion of the House of Commons against the arrogance of a group of Whig noblemen who held control of the House of Lords. He was as fully justified in this step as Lord Grey would have been in 1832, had he carried into action his threat to advise the creation of peers in order to obtain the passing of the Reform Bill. On each occasion the Prime Minister used the royal prerogative to enforce the will of the people; on each occasion, too, he was a man of steady judgment, who yet had at a national crisis the courage and boldness in the one case to adopt, in the other to threaten to employ, a very extraordinary measure, at a moment when

boldness was vital to the success of the policy to carry out which each had been raised to power. Yet one Prime Minister was nominally a Tory and the other a Liberal. Strangely enough, it was the Tory statesman who created a fundamental constitutional precedent. Bolingbroke had no share in this important action; if his own statement is to be believed—and on this point it may be—he regarded the creation of new peers as "an unprecedented and invidious measure, to be excused by nothing but the necessity, and hardly by that"—a step to which Harley had been "forced" by political necessity. He did not perceive that only a statesman imbued by tradition and by training with a belief in the supreme power of the House of Commons, and impressed with a knowledge of the will of the people from a long and constant study of public opinion, so far as it could be ascertained in that age, would have ventured to advise the Queen to exercise the prerogative of the Crown in a manner so new and so modern.

Harley's conduct at this critical time was that of a Liberal statesman. He was fighting against aristocratic pretensions, for peace and for retrenchment, and yet he was the head of a Tory party of which many of the High-flyers were Jacobites. "Early impressions," says Goethe, "can never be shaken off," and Harley throughout the whole of his political life felt the influence of those principles

which his father and his grandfather had professed, and which they had taught him in his youth. But he would have been a more consistent politician if he could have forgotten them altogether. At no moment, however, did he so certainly maintain the principles of democratic government, as when—backed up, it is true, by the Queen—he overthrew the Whigs, who thought with the world-famous name of Marlborough to destroy his administration.

Once again, after this apparently overwhelming defeat, it seemed as though the Whigs were about to resume their attempts to destroy Harley's administration, and with it the hopes of the people for peace; for on 15th February 1712, Halifax carried a motion against the terms of peace as then formulated by the French plenipotentiaries at Utrecht. Harley allowed it to pass without a division, and one may perhaps, considering the terms of confidence which existed between Halifax and Harley, suspect that the motion was not altogether undesired by the Ministry, since if carried it would necessarily strengthen it in the formal negotiations which had commenced and were ultimately concluded by the Peace of Utrecht on the 31st of March 1713.

These negotiations it is not proposed to follow, for unquestionably the chief actor in them from the beginning was not Harley but Bolingbroke, who

conducted them with unwearied patience, sagacity, and resolution.

So many and various national interests were involved that they were singularly complex. The object of the Ministry of Queen Anne was clear: to obtain from France peace on reasonable terms, but not to exact from Louis the extreme demands of the Allies, demands which might result again, as they had in previous years, in an indefinite continuation of hostilities. The situation was curiously complicated, for the two open enemies, France and England, understood each other, and can hardly be regarded as actually hostile; but the Dutch and the Allies were jealous of this country, which had been their paymaster, and they were actuated by self-interest and conflicting ambitions. But whilst abroad the Ministry was embarrassed by allies who were neither frank nor friendly, it had at home to encounter in the two Houses of Parliament a persistent and violent opposition. It is often said that party strife ceases in national emergencies, or when the Administration is involved in delicate negotiations with foreign powers. But in this initial period of the modern political system, foreign affairs afforded the commonest subject for the bitterest and most harassing party attacks. These in the Commons it fell to Bolingbroke to repel; in the Upper House the task was Harley's. During these difficult negotiations Harley was cognisant

of their course, sometimes intervening in them, but their general direction he entrusted to the Secretary, on whom he then thoroughly relied.

"Il ne me sera nécessaire non plus de vous parler du génie, ni de l'esprit de ce seigneur; vous en êtes déjà convainçu par tout le cours de la négociation. Il suffit de vous dire que nous nous reposons sur ses soins pour en voir la fin, et de vous assurer que vous trouverez en lui, au-dessus de toutes les autres belles qualités qu'il possède, un désir plus ardent du monde pour hâter le repos de l'Europe."[1]

It was in these generous terms that Harley wrote to De Torcy shortly before Bolingbroke proceeded on the embassy to Paris which hastened the conclusion of peace. The finances of the country, the management of the two Houses of Parliament, the arrangements with the Queen—these were his more immediate care.

But though the collective responsibility of Ministers had not reached its modern extent, it is not possible to give either the whole credit for the conclusion of peace or discredit attaching to any part of the negotiation to Bolingbroke alone. For the famous restraining orders Harley must be regarded as responsible as Bolingbroke, though it was by the Secretary of State that they were

[1] Morrison Collection of MSS., 1st series, vol. v. p. 79.

sent.[1] They form apparently so singular a piece of diplomacy that they cannot be overlooked in any sketch of Harley's political career. It was in May 1712 that the negotiations arrived at a phase so favourable, in the opinion of the English Ministers, to peace, that Bolingbroke on the 10th despatched to Ormond, who in the beginning of the month had assumed command of the English army in place of Marlborough, directions not to engage in a battle or undertake a siege until further orders, and to keep these instructions secret. Information of these facts was also sent to Maréchal Villars, the French General. The position could not but be humiliating to the English commander, and in his letters to Harley he did not conceal his vexation.[2] It was not surprising that Harley should not reply to Ormond, a leading member, though he was of the Tory party. To a General there could be no defence for such orders. Their justification existed in the abnormal state of affairs. There was more cordiality between France and England than between England and Holland; there was a sincerer wish for peace among the statesmen of France and England than among those of Holland and Germany. The only argument to which the

[1] For a gossiping suggestion that Harley alone was responsible, see Burnett's *History of his Own Times* (Hardwick's note), vi. 128.

[2] *Harley Papers*, iii. 176. Hodgkin MSS., Hist. MSS. Com., 15th Rep. App. pt. ii. pp. 208, 212.

Dutch would yield was that of self-interest, and the object of these orders—in addition to that of preventing a useless bloodshed during a period of negotiation—was to prove to the Allies the necessity of concluding peace by the danger to which their armies would be exposed without the assistance of Great Britain. "The Allies," wrote the Lord Treasurer, when at last he broke silence, "might see what they had lost by Her Majesty's withdrawing her forces."[1] The parliamentary apologia fell wholly to Harley. Ormond, he said, had been ordered not to risk a battle, but he had liberty to besiege a town; an inaccurate quibble which was easily disposed of by the Duke of Marlborough, who quietly asked what was to happen if in the course of a siege an attack was made by the enemy. An adverse vote was averted only by an undertaking that the Ministry would not conclude a separate peace.[2] Wholly different was Bolingbroke's action, since on the very day of the debate he was writing vigorously to Ormond that the Queen's orders "were founded on the most just as well as most prudent considerations," and that Ormond was to find "the most plausible pretence" he could "of sending a trumpet to Maréchal Villars. You are to inform that General

[1] Hodgkin MSS., Hist. MSS. Com., 15th Rep. App. pt. ii. p. 213. August 5–16, 1712.

[2] *Parl. Hist.*, vi. 1135.

of the true state of this affair; you are to acquaint him that we shall not continue long in this uncertain condition, since in a few days we shall expect to hear that the peace is secure."[1]

The Treaty of Utrecht has often been severely criticised, and the Whigs, actuated primarily by purely party motives, before and after it was ratified never ceased to condemn it, though we can estimate the value of some of their strictures by the private approval of Halifax of the peace which Harley and Bolingbroke had secured. Nothing, however, is easier than to attack the terms of a treaty, and the more distant it is, the less difficult becomes academic criticism. For a just appreciation of the Treaty of Utrecht one must comprehend accurately the temper at the time of the English people, the unexampled increase of taxation and of the National Debt, and the difficulty of recruiting, as well as the policy, the action, and the intentions of our continental allies. The people of England peremptorily demanded peace, and the Ministry gave them peace. It is not necessary that the historian should approve all its terms, but he has to note the cardinal fact, that where Godolphin's Ministry failed that of Harley succeeded. In practical life every bargain results from compromises; to gain here, it is necessary to relinquish there; and international contracts are

[1] *Bolingbroke's Correspondence*, i. 514. See note, p. 145.

preceded by similar negotiations. We must look at the sum of the whole matter, bearing in mind, as best we can, all the circumstances of the time. Placing one's self in the position of a candid and just-minded contemporary, there can be little doubt that the policy of Harley was worthy of the national approval. Much may be urged against the secret manner in which from time to time the negotiations were carried on; but there is this to be said for Harley and his Ministry, that previous negotiations in 1709 and 1710 had been largely unsuccessful owing to the uncompromising attitude and the unreasonable demands of the Allies. Thus a separate and secret preliminary negotiation with France alone was most likely to result in a peace. Nor—if occasion had offered—would Holland, jealous of the commercial benefits which Great Britain would obtain, have hesitated, if by separate action she could have gained special advantages for herself.[1] In the result the impressive fact was clear, that the war had been successful and that peace was restored. Harley and Bolingbroke had rightly interpreted and faithfully fulfilled the will of the English people. The unbounded pretensions of France had been stayed; the ultimate succession of the Elector to the English throne was safe-

[1] See the correspondence between Petkum and Torcy, Hist. MSS. Com., 14th Rep. App. pt. ix. p. 329.

guarded; Gibraltar became an English fortress; the seaboard of Canada and the territory of Hudson Bay, with all their future potentialities, were ceded to Great Britain; the *assiento* contract which the Dutch desired for themselves was transferred to England; and, for a time, the friendship of France was gained. Above all, the inestimable blessing of a much-desired peace was secured.[1]

[1] No fact more strikingly illustrates the burden which the war of the Spanish Succession had become, than the rapid increase of the National Debt—

1688,	National Debt,	£664,263.	Annual charge,	£39,855
1702	„	12,767,000	„	1,215,324
1714	„	36,000,000	„	3,063,135

According to the statement supplied to the Commissioners for the Union in 1706, the revenue of England was then £5,691,803.

CHAPTER VII

LAST YEARS OF POWER

1711–1714

HARLEY'S FINANCIAL POLICY—THE SOUTH SEA SCHEME—DE FOE'S INFLUENCE ON IT—ESTRANGEMENT OF HARLEY AND BOLINGBROKE ON CONCLUSION OF PEACE—DEFEAT OF THE GOVERNMENT ON THE COMMERCIAL TREATY WITH FRANCE—DIFFERENCES IN THE POLITICAL VIEWS OF HARLEY AND BOLINGBROKE—ADVISERS OF THE ELECTOR DOUBT HARLEY'S GOOD FAITH—THE SCHISM BILL—THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN HARLEY AND BOLINGBROKE—FALL OF HARLEY—CAUSES OF HIS FALL—DEATH OF THE QUEEN.

THE national finances rather than the negotiations with France engrossed Harley's attention during his administration. Great sums of money had been spent on the war, and more was continually needed. The Minister who has charge of the Exchequer is never without correspondents who volunteer their advice; and throughout his official career Harley constantly received any number of suggestions as to the best manner of raising funds with the least possible burden to the people. Some of the ideas placed before him were sensible, most were fantastic. But each paper, with characteristic care, he considered and preserved, and they are still to be seen in the library at Welbeck Abbey, often

endorsed in Harley's own hand with the date, and sometimes with a note upon their value or contents. In the spring of 1711, before his illness, he had begun to develop his plans, the South Sea scheme being the mainspring of his financial policy. It was based on the same principles as the Bank of England, and as his abortive Land Bank of 1704, its object being to place a portion of the unfunded debt with a number of individuals, some of whom were already Government creditors, holders of army and navy debentures, not charged, however, on any special fund. Dreams of the wealth of the Indies and the Spanish Main, which had stimulated the Elizabethan seamen, still lingered in men's minds, though their energies were differently directed. The new plan was essentially fitted to meet the somewhat visionary ideas of the older age, and the more modern commercial instincts of the existing community. The project had a most specious appearance; it seemed to be formed to encourage and to reward private enterprise, and to support it by the assistance of the Government, thus giving to a purely speculative undertaking an appearance of commercial solidity which it certainly did not possess. The resolutions embodying Harley's plans passed the House of Commons on 2nd May,[1] and later came the South Sea Act,[2] "for making up deficiencies and satisfying the public

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, vi. 1022.

[2] 9 Anne, c. 21.

debt; and for erecting a Corporation to carry out a trade in the South Seas; and for the encouragement of the fishery, and for liberty to trade in immigration, and to repeal the Acts for registering seamen."

From this legislation for the relief of the public credit and the enlarging of British commerce, there resulted the "Company of Merchants of Great Britain trading to the South Seas and the other parts of America," of which Harley became governor, and St. John, and Benson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, two of the first directors. It came into being on 7th September 1711, and on its formation the floating debt of ten millions was assigned to the new Corporation, with a guaranteed interest at the rate of six per cent. To the Company was also granted a nominal monopoly of the trade in the South Seas—nominal because the English statute could only give an exclusive right of trade to this Corporation as against English subjects. However visionary the commercial advantages of this scheme may have been, the speculation which it created, and the ruin which followed in 1720, were in no sense necessary sequels to Harley's plan. The speculation in which, a few years hence, high and low, politicians and the public, madly rushed, arose from one of those financial fevers from which, from time to time, England has suffered. In its inception the enterprise had, as against other

English traders, a monopoly, and in India and North America two great monopolistic Corporations were then achieving success. It looked for its immediate profit to a sure and undoubted source of revenue —the slave trade. No word at the beginning of the eighteenth century was more commonly heard among merchants than *assiento*, by which was understood the right to supply the Spanish colonies with slaves. By the preliminaries of peace signed in September 1711, this right, hitherto enjoyed by the French, and which the Dutch would only have been too glad to obtain, was to be granted exclusively to the English, Louis relinquishing a privilege which was regarded as of the highest commercial value. How closely, therefore, this Company was associated with Harley's administration, how much the success of his chief financial scheme was involved with the success of his main political object, is obvious. No wonder that, when, during the course of the negotiations, De Torcy told him that the article in regard to the Spanish trade "was impossible to be granted," Prior should write—

"My heart ached extremely, and I was ready to sink, but, recollecting myself, I thought it time to say that if this was to continue a maxim I was very sorry that my coming hither was of no effect, and that I looked upon myself as very unhappy, while I told him with the same plainness, *ouverture*

de cœur, that he used to me, that it was impossible that peace should be made on any other condition." [1]

The loss of the treaty would have caused the failure of this plan; the signing of the preliminaries assured its success.

But though the principle of the South Sea scheme was similar to that of the Land Bank of 1704, many things suggest that its inception was largely due to De Foe. On 17th July 1711, a remarkable letter to Harley clearly points to previous communications between them on this subject. "In pursuance," De Foe begins, "of your lordship's orders of putting my thoughts in writing on the subject of the trade to the South Seas, I have enclosed to you a short general." Then follows a memorandum :—

"1. Respecting the Government, that a debt of nine millions be at once satisfied, and the Government eased of so great a demand.

"2. That the creditors for that debt may receive some advantage above their 6 per cent., that may be so considerable as to raise their actions, and make them gainers by their subscription." [2]

This was exactly the object of Harley's policy. But De Foe was too clear-headed to overlook the dangers which threatened the Company, and he did not hesitate to point them out—that though

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 36.

[2] *Harley Papers*, iii. 50.

possessed of a monopoly in name, the Company had not one in fact.

On 23rd July De Foe writes again. From the commencement of the letter it is obvious that for some years schemes for trading in the South Seas had long been fermenting in his ever-active brain, and had been formulated and submitted to the late King—

"The two papers I have already sent your Lordship were only the thoughts in general which, in obedience to your commands, I have reduced to form on the South Sea expedition. I here offer to your Lordship a scheme for the practice. I hope it may not be less acceptable to you for that it has been formerly proposed, since I can assure you no eye ever saw the draft except his late Majesty and the Earl of Portland, and the originals were always in my own hand, till my Lord Nottingham's fury forced me to burn them with other papers to keep them out of his hands. They are here rough and indigested, but if you approve of them in the gross I shall single it out to put in a dress more suitable for your service. Meantime I shall go on to lay the remaining schemes before you."[1]

From this correspondence—bearing in mind, too, the reliance which Harley placed on De Foe's judgment as well as his own want of imagination

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 59.

and initiative—it is hardly possible to overrate the influence of De Foe upon the consolidation of the floating debt and the creation of the South Sea Company.

The head of the Administration by which the commercial and the political results of the Treaty of Utrecht were obtained, should have been in consequence greatly strengthened. On the contrary, the conclusion of peace was the beginning of Harley's fall. The cardinal object of the policy which served as a bond between the Prime Minister and Bolingbroke was attained, and the field of domestic politics was left free for the most passionate and personal dissensions. Harley was a moderate Whig by conviction and temperament, Bolingbroke was a Tory from ambition and policy. The keynote of Harley's policy was management; of Bolingbroke's, mastery. The one was over-cautious, the other rash. The one sought to discover the drift of public opinion and to trim his sails according to it; the other acted on his individual judgment, which was that of an academic thinker, who had some of the contempt of the fashionable aristocrat for the ideas of the general public. There was yet another reason for their political divergence. Harley, though one of the landed gentry and intimately acquainted with their views and wishes, had a keener appreciation than Bolingbroke of the power of the towns, and of the increasing importance of the commercial class.

But it was the opinion of Bolingbroke—and one which says little for his sagacity—that when the war was ended the landed interest would rise, "and the monied interest, which is the great support of Whiggism, must of course decline."[1] A statesman possessed with this idea would naturally unite himself more and more closely with what he conceived to be the party of the future. But such an association with the landed interest necessarily produced an active alliance with all the extremer sections of the Tory party, and an antagonism to all the theories by which Harley's political career had hitherto been guided. Thus, apart from their peculiar personal positions, a conflict between the two men was now inevitable. Bolingbroke too, unscrupulous, abler, and more determined than Harley, was serving under him—it was impossible he should continue a subordinate. Yet Harley, though not a man consumed by ambition, enjoyed political business; he had a good deal of stubborn pride, and no man will willingly and quietly sink into the second place. A struggle for supremacy was therefore certain. Harley has stated that the disagreement between himself and Bolingbroke commenced in February 1711, when Bolingbroke began to form a separate party;[2] but up to this

[1] *Bolingbroke's Corresp.*, edited by Parke, Ap. 29, 1712.

[2] "The Lord Treasurer Oxford's Letter to the Queen, June 9, 1714, covering a Brief Account of Public Affairs since August 8, 1710."—*Parl. Hist.*, vi. ccvliii. App. No. 4.

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From a portrait by Hyacinth Rigaud in the National Portrait Gallery

moment he had no active personal dislike of Harley. "I began, indeed, in my 'heart,'" he says, speaking of the events of 1712 many years afterwards, "to renounce the friendship which till that time I had preserved inviolable for Oxford." From that moment he conceived for him a contempt which grew to the bitterest detestation.

The Treaty of Commerce of 1713 between Great Britain and France was also an important cause of difference between the two statesmen. This engagement was based on free trade principles. The eighth and ninth articles of the Treaty provided that all English and French goods should enjoy the same commercial privileges as to duties and customs as the most favoured nation; that the English should repeal all prohibitions of French goods which had been imposed since 1664; and that no French goods imported into England should pay higher duties than similar goods imported from any other European country. On the other hand, the French were to repeal all prohibitions of English goods since 1664.

This scheme was too bold and far-seeing, too much in advance of public opinion, to have been evolved by Harley. Bolingbroke, with his philosophic turn of mind, his large views, his habitual contempt for public opinion, was its originator. On 18th June, however, the Bill to make effective the eighth and ninth articles of the Treaty was thrown

out in the Commons by a majority of nine votes,[1] several of the Tories who had previously supported the measure now opposing it. "The reason of the majority was," wrote Bolingbroke to Lord Strafford, "that there had been during two or three days' uncertainty an opinion spread that the Lord Treasurer gave up the point." It is more probable that Harley, aware of the public and commercial dislike of the Treaty, was secretly assisting its enemies. At that very time he was in close communication with Halifax, the founder of the financial system of the Revolution. It would be in accord with Harley's financial opinions to object to his masterful colleague's advanced views, and he would not be unlikely to thwart them by underhand means.[2]

But the difference between the aims of the Lord Treasurer and of the Secretary of State were so fundamental and so marked, that agreement was impossible. Harley attempted to govern by the

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, vi. 1223.

[2] The following letter, written on 28th May by Halifax to Harley, may refer to this subject, since the first debate on the Bill took place on 14th May. On the other hand, the letter closely follows some which refer to securing the Protestant succession :—

"I should be wanting to the confidence and favour your Lordship showed me in your last letter, if I did not acquaint you that I have so far discoursed some of my friends as to be able to assure you that your Lordship may depend upon their being ready to concur with your Lordship, if you think it fit to oppose the wild proceeding with which we are threatened. I am ready to attend your Lordship at St. James', or anywhere else you shall appoint, if you really think I can serve you and desire I should."—*Harley Papers*, iii. 292.

most elaborate system of playing one party against the other, while nominally the chief of that which was in power, that any statesman has ever ventured on. It involved him after 1713 in nothing less than a tissue of duplicity, and yet the foundation of it all was his desire to act on principles of moderation. It caused him even to be impeached as a traitor, while at the same time it did not gain the confidence of those whom he intended to cajole. Whigs and Hanoverians, Tories and Jacobites alike had doubts of his good faith, which were magnified because the whole political atmosphere was thick with distrust. Every politician was in a state of extraordinary apprehension and uncertainty, and every word which was spoken was listened to with suspicion, if not with disbelief. Baron Schutz, who had become the Hanoverian Envoy to London in April 1713, was active, meddlesome, and incredulous, and he had formed the opinion, which coloured his correspondence, that Harley was not sincere in his expressions of fidelity to the Hanoverian succession. "The protestation which the Lord Treasurer himself made to me, that he would take care of our affairs in case of the Queen's death, have little weight with me."[1] These impressions, conveyed to the advisers of the Elector and transmitted to him, must undoubtedly have

[1] *Macpherson Papers*, ii. 554 (Schutz to Robethon, 13th February 1714).

prejudiced a man who regarded English politics and English statesmen as a foreigner. Harley's friends were equally ready to endeavour to take advantage of the Elector's ignorance of England. On one occasion, Anthony Murray told Harley, in a long letter from Hanover, how he had informed the Elector in the course of conversation, that in 1710 "the Duke of Marlborough was endeavouring to have a patent to be generalissimo for life, my Lord Godolphin to be Great Treasurer for life, my Lord Wharton to be Vice-King of Ireland, etc. In which I told His Highness, if they had succeeded Her Majesty was not only no more Queen, but they would have sold the powerful crowns and dominions of Great Britain." The writer then adds that the Elector asked if "it was certain" that these noblemen "endeavoured to have these great offices for life," and he repeats his assertions. By way of enhancing his pretensions to Harley's favour, Murray concludes by the remark that a person not a relative, but "a faithful friend and servant like me, will also be minded in telling the truth in your favour, as not being suspected of any partiality."[1]

It was unfortunate for the policy which Harley was pursuing, that in this abnormal political situation the Electress Sophia and her son should have been prevailed on to allow Baron Schutz to demand

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 477–479 (2nd June 1714).

for the Electoral Prince a writ of summons to the House of Lords in right of his peerage as Duke of Cambridge. No one denied that he was entitled to it, but the demand created unbounded excitement among statesmen both at Hanover and in London. The Elector and his advisers, as well as the Whig chiefs in England, doubted the good faith of the Queen, and were apprehensive that the Pretender would be invited by her to London. They knew that she had some affection for her brother, that she must be influenced by the letters which she received from him, and it was the knowledge of this fact which excited the apprehension of the Whigs. The mission (1714) of Thomas Harley—the cousin of the Lord Treasurer—to Hanover to express the goodwill of the Queen to the Elector only increased the suspicions of the Opposition. If the Electoral Prince came to London, it was thought by them that the Hanoverian succession would, upon the death of the Queen, be secured as well as their own return to power. But the objections of the Queen to this demand were strong and open.[1] It made the Queen, said Harley, more angry than he had ever seen her, and it was obvious to him that the visit would shatter his whole present policy, parties would be sharply divided, and to become on friendly terms with the Electoral Prince and his advisers would

[1] *Macpherson Papers*, ii. 589.

cause him to incur the displeasure of the Queen, and would terminate his alliance with the Tories. His object was to keep affairs in their present state, to continue as Prime Minister of the Queen during the short period of life which might remain to her, and if possible to obtain a renewal of power when in no long time the Elector should ascend the throne. The accentuation of party differences was also opposed to his lifelong political views, and, as has been said, the visit of the Electoral Prince must, he thought, have this result. "The factions," he wrote to Baron Duyvenvoorde, "are so high, it will be very unfortunate for so great a prince to be only prince over a party which can never last long in England";[1] and to Thomas Harley he said that this visit would "shift the dispute. It will be no more between a Popish Pretender and the Serene House of Hanover, but people will immediately change it into a contest between the present possessor and the future successor."[2] Though it was clearly to Harley's personal advantage that affairs should be allowed to run their course, yet in opposing the visit of the Electoral Prince he was acting also in the best interest of the country; for however much the Queen may have regretted that her brother had debarred himself from mounting the

[1] *Macpherson Papers*, ii. 593.
[2] *Harley Papers*, iii. 418 (13th and 24th April 1714).

throne, there is no reason to suppose that she would have taken the violent step of actively assisting in his return, or that such a policy would have received the support of more than the Jacobite minority. For the majority of the English people—troubled and puzzled though they were by the notorious differences between the Ministers of the Queen—expected and were in favour of the Hanoverian succession. "Notwithstanding the aspersions that have been thrown, there is," wrote Lord Berkeley to the Earl of Strafford, "such an aversion to Popery, that I believe in my conscience the generality thinks of nothing after the Queen but the house of Hanover."[1] Harley was well aware of this deeply rooted national feeling, which rendered measures to safeguard the succession to the throne unnecessary, and it was only the anomaly of his position as head of the Tory party that prevented him from showing his opinions more openly. His antagonism, however, to the proposal seemed to the Elector and his advisers inconsistent with his professions of friendship for the house of Hanover.

Bolingbroke, on the other hand, boldly and publicly threw himself on the Tory side. "They are like hounds, fond of the man who shows them game and by whose halloo they are used to be encouraged." Thus, many years later, he de-

[1] *Wentworth Papers*, 361 (16th March 1714).

scribed the character of the House of Commons. The description exactly suits the disposition of the Tory party when Bolingbroke bid for the leadership of it. His policy from his point of view had this great merit, it must inevitably give him the chief place in his party, and eventually also must cause the downfall of Harley. Bolingbroke's plan was quite simple, but none the less effective for its purpose. In May 1714 his friend Sir William Windham moved to introduce a Schism Bill, to prevent schoolmasters from carrying on their occupation unless they had taken the sacrament; it passed through the House of Commons,[1] and in the Lords was pressed forward by Bolingbroke.

This was a blow aimed at the Dissenters, a proceeding gratifying to the High Churchmen and extreme Tories, but distinctly harmful to the welfare of the nation. It instantly placed Harley in a dilemma. He had never sympathised with ecclesiastical fanaticism, and he was sincerely anxious to promote peace and goodwill in England. But, chief of the Tory party, how could he oppose Windham's and Bolingbroke's Bill? De Foe, on whose opinions Harley relied so much, was of course strongly hostile to it. On 21st May he wrote a weighty letter to his patron—

"Last night's conversation could not but afford

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, vi. 349.

many useful remarks to me, and I thought it my duty to mention to your Lordship again my observations on that part which relates to the Dissenters.

"First the Bill depending about the Dissenters' schools, which I fear will pass, it is true the conduct of the Dissenters has called for more than this, and this may remind them of a hint I gave them in 'The Letter,'[1] whether they enjoyed no favours from Her Majesty's bounty which they might not forfeit by their present behaviour. I doubt not, but their pretended friends, the Whigs, will give them up in this, as they did in the Occasional Bill;[2] and which is worse, they will give themselves up too, rather than not carry on their party mischief; I pity them, but I cannot but recommend the interest of posterity to your compassion. As to their academies, if there had never been any, I know not but their interest had been as good, and fewer beggars and drones had bred up for ministers among them. But for the schools for common introduction (?) of children, I think their loss will be irreparable. It is true that they will have schools still, they will be no more illegal than before, but it seems hard upon the nation in general to make laws which it will be necessary to break, like that of the late Abjuration Act in Scotland."[3]

[1] Letter to the Dissenters, (Dec. 1713) urging them to moderation.
[2] See p. 128.
[3] *Harley Papers*, iii. 444.

Halifax, with whom—though one of the Junto—Harley was constantly taking counsel, evidently considered that the Bill gave the Lord Treasurer an opportunity of placing his country before party.

"The Land Tax," he writes on May 29th, "and the Malt (Tax) are passed, and the Bill of Schism is at the door; if I am any judge of opportunities, your enemies have thrown such a game into your hands as never happened to any man before, and is the peculiar happiness of my Lord Oxford. I beg you to make use of this conjuncture, which is most favourable, too, in other respects, to save your country. Allow me to wait upon you and explain my thoughts to you upon this occasion. If you will name the time when you will be at St. James', I will attend you, and come disposed to join in any measures you shall direct, or prepared to offer such a scheme as may save this kingdom from distraction and ruin."[1]

But though Harley's principles prevented him from actively consenting to this unjust measure, his desire of retaining office, his wish not yet to break away from the party of which he was still nominally the leader, and his naturally non-combative and uncommanding spirit, would not permit him to oppose it, as a bolder statesman, as great men like Chatham or Fox, would have done, or as, a few years later, Walpole opposed the Peerage Bill.

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 451.

His feeble and vacillating action showed that he could not cope with the difficulties which confronted him. He suggested that the Bill was of some value, and that the hardships pointed out by the Whigs might be eliminated in committee. When a motion was made that the Nonconformists should be heard by counsel, he refused to commit himself and would not vote, yet at other stages he was found voting with its supporters;[1] and so he pleased neither his opponents nor his own party. Neither Nonconformists nor Tories could —it was clear—rely on him; but while of the former he desired to be the good friend, of the latter he was the nominal leader. Such action, therefore, could have but one result: the loss of all authority as chief of the Tory party, and, it must be frankly added, on this occasion, of credit either as a statesman, or as an honest and straightforward politician. Comparisons between statesmen of different epochs are often misleading, but it is impossible not to contrast Harley and Peel. Each had some remarkable points in common: a love of moderation and of national economy, each was free from religious animosity, each was head of the Tory party, and each in principle was in sympathy with his opponents. But whereas Peel was true to his convictions, Harley never had the courage to sacrifice his party to principle,

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, vi. 1354. *Wentworth Papers*, 386, 388.

though he was not hypocrite enough to be able to hide his real opinions. Each statesman was in the result disowned by his party, but the one gained the appreciation of posterity, the other its condemnation.

The game was now in Bolingbroke's hands. The political conflict became a personal strife around the sick and lonely Queen. Hers must be the last word; and so in her Cabinet Harley had to make his last stand, Bolingbroke and his faction striving meanwhile to gain her consent to the dismissal of the Lord Treasurer. Anne's ecclesiastical prejudices, and her jealousy of her successor, were played on by the enemies of the Lord Treasurer; while on his side he had to justify his policy, sometimes sharply, to depreciate his antagonists, to suggest that they were plotting for the Pretender. It was a discreditable and undignified conflict, in which it is difficult to follow Harley's actual course. A pitiful and unmanly conduct has been attributed to him by some, a vigilant and composed attitude has been the description of others. There is probably truth in each statement. That he would play on the Queen's feelings now in one way and now in another, was certain; he would now appeal to her heart and now to her head, now talk to her as a friend and now address her as a Minister. And throughout, his expressions, after the manner of the age, would be

exaggerated; and so an appeal to the Queen's good feelings, somewhat pitifully framed, should not be taken too literally. Hitherto, neither political success nor political disaster had ever disturbed Harley's unvarying serenity, and there is no reason to suppose that he lost his habitual self-control during the conflicts which preceded his ultimate fall. But such a struggle as this was fitly ended by a woman's influence. Lady Masham was ever by the side of the Queen, and her influence, veiled under the attractive guise of friendship, was the final factor in Harley's fall as it was in his rise to supreme power.[1] It was a strange political scene, one which has never been and can never be

[1] Dr. Arbuthnot, who as physician to the Queen had unique opportunities of knowing the course of events at Court, wrote to Swift on 26th June: "I will plague you a little by telling you the Dragon dies hard. He is now kicking and cuffing about here like the devil." On 10th July: "The Dragon holds fast with a dead grip the little machine" ("the treasurer's staff"). On the 17th: "Our situation at present is in short thus: they have *romper en visière* with the Dragon, and yet don't know how to do without him. My Lady Masham has in a manner bid him defiance, without any scheme or likeness of it in any form or shape, as far as I can see. Notwithstanding, he visits, cringes, flatters, etc., which is beyond my comprehension." On 24th July: "I was told . . . that I did not know the half of his (Harley's) proceedings. Particularly, it was said, though I am confident it is a mistake, that he had attempted the removing her (Lady Masham) from the favour of a great person. In short, the fall of the Dragon does not proceed altogether from his old friend (Lady Masham), but from the great person (the Queen), whom I perceive to be highly offended by little hints that I have received. In short, the Dragon has been so ill-used, and must serve upon such terms for the future, if he should that I swear, I would not advise Turk, Jew, nor Infidel to be in that state."—Correspondence printed in Aitken's *Life of Arbuthnot*, pp. 63, 67, 70, 74.

repeated, illustrative only too vividly of the unexampled state of English politics when Harley ceased to be Prime Minister.

The struggle ended on July 27th; on that day Harley was dismissed from the Queen's service.

"My good friend," wrote Lady Masham to Swift on 29th July, "I own it looks unkind in me not to thank you all this time for your sincere kind letter; but I was resolved to stay till I could tell you the Queen had got so far the better of the dragon as to take her power out of his hands. He has been the most ungrateful man to her, and all his best friends, that ever was born.

"I cannot have so much time now to write all my mind, because my dear mistress is not well, and I think I may lay her illness to the charge of the Treasurer, who for three weeks together was teasing and vexing her without intermission! And she could not get rid of him till Tuesday last."[1]

Anne's ostensible reasons for the dismissal of Harley were as personal as those which served for that of Godolphin, and were childishly inaccurate—

"He neglected all business; he was seldom to be understood; when he did explain himself she could not depend upon the truth of what he

[1] Swift's *Works*, xvi. 164.

said; he never came to her at the time she appointed; he often came drunk; lastly, to crown all, he behaved himself toward her with bad manners, indecency, and disrespect."

The blow having been struck, Harley suffered it with an outward calm, characteristic of his public demeanour throughout his life. This composure came partly from temperament, partly from a long course of self-restraint, by no means common among his contemporaries. He announced his fall to his sister with the same remarkable absence of vexation as he did to Swift. This may by some be regarded as affectation; it was real, and never throughout his most intimate correspondence did he allude, except with calmness, to his loss of power, or show either resentment or even annoyance at the action of Anne, "the dear Queen," as he writes of her on the eve of her funeral,[1] and once overthrown, he made no sustained attempt, as a more ambitious man would have done, to rise. Equally genuine was his idea of duty; for in the strange and difficult political circumstances of the age he followed a consistent, if a somewhat questionable, standard of political conduct.

"I hope," he writes on July 29th, "my dearest sister was sufficiently prepared for what happened

[1] Lord Oxford to Edward Harley, 19th August 1714. Brampton MSS., No. 117.

on Tuesday night, that there was no need of my writing by that post, if it had been possible.

"I came in with the expectation of the treatment I meet with. I thought it as much my duty then to come in as now to be out, and it is my comfort I do go out with as much honour and innocency as I came in. Let me send you the following imitation:—

"'To serve with love,
And shed your blood,
Approved is above;
But here below,
Th' examples show,
It is fatal to be good.'

"God preserve my dearest sister. Affectionate service to Sister Harley. I pray God bless all the little ones."[1]

When most men would have been unable to conceal their thoughts on the importance of the event which had just occurred, Harley was ostentatiously interested in a childish rhyme. For he says at the conclusion of a letter at the same time to Swift, "I send you an imitation of Dryden (composed) as I went to Kensington." They are the same jingling lines which he despatched to his sister.

Harley's fall was the necessary result of his desire to stand well with two deeply antagonistic

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 477.

parties, of an incapacity boldly to sever himself after the Peace of Utrecht from the Tories; he lost their confidence without gaining the support of their opponents. That throughout the last two years of his official life Harley was not only on the closest terms of political intimacy with Halifax, but was planning with him some kind of political combination, is now abundantly clear. "I shall wait upon you to-morrow at St. James'," wrote Halifax on the 27th of May 1713, "with an earnest desire on my part, and sufficient authority from others, to make a perfect union with your Lordship to support the true interest of our country under your directions."[1] The existence of some scheme for such a union as that which Halifax indicates, a union probably of the less virulent Whigs, led by Halifax and Somers, with a small number of Tories who Harley hoped would act with him, is the most probable explanation of his conduct. Had the Queen lived, a coalition might perhaps have resulted; but it was frustrated by the death of Anne before it was ripe, and the political edifices of Harley and of Bolingbroke were thus alike laid low. By the extreme members of the Tory party the professions of sympathy with the Jacobite cause which Harley may have thrown out in hints were fast becoming regarded as unreal; by a still larger number he was thought to be luke-

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 292. See also pp. 270, 271.

warm in his attachment to the Church of England, and to be a Dissenter in disguise. Men said too—and this was not altogether untrue—that, having secured for himself a high place in the peerage, his ambition was satisfied. Thus at the end of his administration he inspired no confidence as a party leader; losing the trust of the Tories, he lost also that of the Queen, and, like Godolphin, he was obliged to resort to the same system of expostulation and of entreaty. Like Godolphin, his political life was finally destroyed by Lady Masham. Why she had ceased to be Harley's friend and ally, and had become his enemy, is not quite clear. Every one about the Court had a different reason to give. Probably a conjunction of comparatively unimportant causes — personal estrangement, dissatisfaction with what she regarded as persecution of the Queen, the influence of Bolingbroke, perhaps the fact that she had not received shares in the South Sea Company, combined to produce this change. It was sufficient, however, to become the final cause of Harley's fall. As with Godolphin, so it was with Harley—one was watching to succeed him. All things therefore tended towards one result, and it was scarcely possible for Harley to have escaped from this political catastrophe.[1]

[1] The narrative of Harley's administration ought not to be left without referring to the careful work of Dr. Felix Salamon, *Geschichte des letzten Ministeriums Königin Annas*, Gotha, 1894.

CHAPTER VIII

IMPEACHMENT—IMPRISONMENT—RETIREMENT

1714–1724

HARLEY'S POSITION ON DEATH OF QUEEN ANNE—HIS HOPES ON ACCESSION OF GEORGE I.—PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE TORY LEADERS—IMPEACHMENT OF HARLEY—IMPRISONMENT IN THE TOWER—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO HOUSES—ACQUITTAL—HARLEY AND THE JACOBITES—OPPOSITION TO THE PEERAGE BILL—INDIFFERENCE TO FINANCIAL DISTRESS RESULTING FROM SOUTH SEA SCHEME—HARLEY AND HIS FRIENDS—PRIOR AND SWIFT—DEATH—SUMMARY OF HIS CHARACTER AND LIFE.

NO political victory was ever more momentary than that of Bolingbroke, for on the 1st of August 1714 the Queen died, and the power which he had hardly grasped fell from his hands. With the accession of the Elector of Hanover to the English throne, the Whigs returned to power for a generation, and Harley's political career—whilst he was still in the prime of life—was permanently concluded. From boyhood somewhat delicate, his health and vigour had been exhausted by the critical and trying years—few though they were—which had elapsed since he became Prime Minister in 1710. Many statesmen have remained in supreme power for a longer period, but none for

one which was more momentous and memorable, than the last four years of the reign of Anne.

Immediately after the Queen's death the fallen Minister retired, first to Wimpole in Cambridgeshire, the home by marriage of his eldest son, and then to Brampton. There he interested himself in the local elections for the new Parliament which met in March 1715, and which, unlike that just dissolved, was entirely Whig in sentiment. For a moment some hope seems to have arisen in his mind that his experience and his moderation of opinion, and the desire which, in his correspondence with the Elector, he had always shown to stand well with the new sovereign, might cause him to be recalled to office. The King's "unacquaintedness and partial information" would, he thought, prevent him from forming a stable administration. "Neither party of the two denominations separately," he wrote to his late colleague, Lord Dartmouth, "can form any such as is practicable, they have not credit enough,"[1] so "an understanding must be found among those who wish a settlement in England." The same dominating idea which had possessed Harley through his whole career still governed him, but in the belief which he thus expressed to Dartmouth he showed a lack of appreciation of the political situation and of the

[1] Dartmouth MSS., Hist. MSS., 11th Rept. App. part v. p. 321 (end of August 1714).

strength of party bitterness. True, it was not he who now was to be the moderator, it was Dartmouth's "healing hand" which was to apply the remedy; for which he thought there was a great preparation and disposition everywhere. But this hope did not last long, and before the Elector arrived in England Harley perceived that there was no possibility of his return to power.[1]

A fate very different from the formation of Cabinets was to be his during the ensuing years, for in the spring of 1715 there began the famous proceedings against the leaders of the late Tory Ministry. Threats against them occupied a prominent place in the Address in answer to the Speech from the Throne. "It appears," ran that which was moved by Walpole in the Commons referring to the action of the Pretender, "that his hopes were built upon the measures that had been taken for some time past in Great Britain. It shall be our business to trace out those measures whereon he placed his hopes, and to bring the authors of them to condign punishment."[2] Bolingbroke, to escape from the impeachment which was

[1] In a letter to his brother, Auditor Harley, from the Tower, of 13th February 1717 (Brampton MSS.), Harley says that on the Queen's death he gave assurances to the King and his Ministers of "my fixed resolution to retire, and I did put the same in practice until my accusation called me out of the country." The letter to Dartmouth was written at the end of August, and the King arrived on 18th September.

[2] *Parl. Hist.*, vii. 4.

impending, fled on the 26th of March to France, and in July became Secretary of State to the Pretender. It appeared to be a public avowal of his intrigues with the Jacobites. Of this, at any rate, there can be no doubt, it showed in Bolingbroke extraordinary want of sagacity, it suggested a close negotiation with the Pretender before the death of the Queen, and it is the clearest evidence of unpatriotism, because he could not have intended to remain as Secretary of State to a king without a kingdom, and that kingdom could only be obtained at the cost of a civil war. Bolingbroke's action therefore unquestionably tends to justify Harley's opposition to him in the Cabinet, because it is some proof, if not of actual Jacobite intrigues, at any rate of unsound political judgment. Harley, answering an urgent appeal from his brother Edward—Auditor Harley—to hasten to London, replied curtly, "The going away of Lord Bolingbroke is like his other practices. I thank God I was never in his secret, and for late years out of his way of converse, but only what was necessary."[1]

By some it was thought that Bolingbroke's flight would sufficiently satisfy the enemies of the late Government, and that Harley would not be molested; but they were mistaken. On the 9th of April a secret Committee, of which Walpole was elected Chairman, was appointed to inquire

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 510

into the late peace and other matters. On the 10th of June—the Committee having reported—Walpole moved the impeachment of Bolingbroke, which was carried without a division. Presently Lord Coningsby[1]—a violent and unswerving Whig, and a bitter local opponent of Harley—rose. "The worthy Chairman of the Committee," he said, "has impeached the hand, but I do impeach the head; he has impeached the Clerk, and I the Justice; he has impeached the scholar, and I the master: I impeach Robert Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer of high treason and other crimes and misdemeanours."[2] It is doubtful whether the Government intended to impeach the late Lord Treasurer. If such had been their policy, it was he who from his rank should have been first proceeded against, and the motion should have been made not by a private member, but, as in the case of Bolingbroke and Ormond, by the Chairman of the Committee or by one of the Administration. After speeches from Harley's relative, the Auditor, and Mr. Foley, Sir Joseph Jekyll, Chief Justice of Chester and a staunch Whig and one of the Committee, spoke, declaring

[1] Thomas Earl Coningsby (1656(?)–1729), M.P. for Leominster 1679–1710 and 1715–1719, when he was raised to the English peerage as Earl Coningsby, having been created an Irish peer in 1692. An ardent supporter of William III., he was by his side at the battle of the Boyne, and held various official positions and also local dignities in Herefordshire and Radnorshire.

[2] *Parl. Hist.*, vii. 67.

that there were no grounds for an impeachment. Then the Whigs perceiving the weakness of their case, "a member of the Committee" rose and declared that besides what had appeared in their report, "they had other evidence *vivâ voce*." In other words, the House was asked to pass the motion not on the facts before it, but on something undisclosed and unknown. Party spirit ran too high for the majority to be judicial, and Harley's friends doubtless thought that resistance at the moment was inopportune; so this theatrically worded resolution was carried without a division, and Harley on the 9th of July was committed to the Tower.

The first articles of impeachment[1] contained charges which were no more than criticisms of policy, and were wholly without weight as a criminal indictment. In August, however, six further articles were added, one of which was an accusation of high treason, for it charged Harley, vaguely enough, with aiding the Pretender. His answers to the accusations against him took the form of a general defence of his political actions, and of his policy during the last four years of the reign of Queen Anne. Throughout this defence the modern idea of ministerial responsibility is conspicuously absent. Every act of Harley was done with the knowledge and the approbation—he

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, vii. 67, 74.

asserts—of his sovereign, and he shields himself —if fault he has committed—behind the authority of his mistress. So that in reading Harley's elaborate apologia of his policy and conduct, we are constantly reminded of the still embryonic state of theories of political conduct which are now accepted as axiomatic, and of the still undoubted influence of the Crown.

But the Ministers of the new sovereign had more pressing business on hand than that of carrying on a State trial, and from a party point of view it was sufficient that the late Lord Treasurer lay imprisoned under a charge of high treason. Delay after delay ensued, and for two years Harley remained a prisoner in the Tower. When at last, on the 24th of June 1717, he was brought to the Bar within the historic walls of Westminster Hall, his trial was dramatically interrupted by his old colleague, Lord Harcourt, who moved that the Peers do adjourn to their own House. There Harcourt at once moved and carried a resolution that the Commons be not admitted to proceed with Harley's trial for high crimes and misdemeanours, "till judgment be first given upon the articles for high treason." The object of this step was obvious. It was impossible, as had been evident from the beginning of the impeachment, that Harley could be convicted of high treason; and acquitted upon this charge, the whole

sting of the prosecution would be gone. Moreover, as the House of Commons were the accusers and the House of Lords the judges, the Peers by this motion were infringing the privileges of the Lower House, and were thus creating a technical difficulty, which could only be overcome by the withdrawal of the motion or by the waiving of the Commons' rights. As neither side would give way, the conferences between the two Houses produced no result, and a motion in the Commons on the 1st of July that the trial should proceed in the manner indicated by Harcourt was negatived. This was the virtual end of Harley's long-impending trial, and on the 3rd of July, the Commons not appearing, he was acquitted by the House of Lords,[1] the

[1] The following are the steps in the impeachment of Harley :—

1715.

10th June. Resolution passed in House of Commons for impeachment of the Earl of Oxford.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 67.

7th July. Articles of impeachment agreed to by House of Commons and sent to House of Lords.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 74.

7th July. Order by House of Lords for committal of Earl of Oxford to custody.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 106.

12th July. Order for committal to the Tower.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 107.

2nd Aug. Six further articles of impeachment read and carried to House of Lords.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 114.

3rd Sept. Answer of Earl of Oxford delivered to House of Lords. —*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 158.

7th Sept. Answer sent to House of Commons and debate thereon. —*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 211.

11th Sept. Replication of House of Commons to the answer carried to the House of Lords.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 212, 213.

1717.

22nd May. Petition of Earl of Oxford that his case be taken into

very body which during his Ministry had been his most troublesome and determined enemy. The time had in truth gone by when purely political action on the part of a statesman, however odious to his opponents, could bring him to the block. Half a century later, Harley would never have been impeached—a vote of censure would have been his severest punishment; a little more than fifty years earlier he might have lost his head on Tower Hill. Time, too, softens even the rancour of party, and nearly two years of office had lessened

consideration and debate thereon in the House of Lords.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 462.

27th May. After debate, 13th of June appointed for trial.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 465.

12th June. Motion in House of Commons for postponement of trial. —*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 475.

24th June. Trial of Earl of Oxford opened in Westminster Hall, and adjournment.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 481.

24th June. Motion carried in House of Lords that the Commons be not admitted to proceed till judgment be first given upon the articles for high treason.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 486.

27th June. Conference between the two Houses, and messages between the two Houses.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 487.

1st July. Motion in House of Commons that Harley's trial do proceed as indicated by the House of Lords, lost on a division.

3rd July. Trial renewed (7 p.m.), and on the nonappearance of Commons the Earl of Oxford was acquitted.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 494.

3rd July. Address to King carried in House of Commons to except the Earl of Oxford from Act of Grace.—*Parl. Hist.*, vii. 496.

See also Howell's *State Trials*, xv. 1046, and *The Whole Proceedings against Robert Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer*, London, 1715, which contains the first portion only of the proceedings, the writer amiably expressing his hope that in a future publication he may describe Harley's condemnation and punishment.

the resentment of many of the Whigs to a man who had almost unwillingly been their antagonist. By the people generally he had neither been loved nor hated, but large numbers regarded him with respect because of his admitted moderation of character, and sympathised with him for an imprisonment which he bore with dignity, courage, and good temper. Thus his acquittal was received with approval by the public. "Our friend," wrote Erasmus Lewis to Swift, on the day after Harley's release, "has at present many more friends than ever he had before in any part of his life." Under these circumstances some men would have tried to regain political power; but though Harley did not cease to take a part from time to time in parliamentary business, he never made a vigorous attempt to recover the important position which he had held so long among contemporary statesmen.

In his own age, and in those which have followed, there have been many who have considered that Harley was guilty of something hardly distinguishable from treason. But the charges which have been made against him appear to show a complete misconception both of his policy and of his character, even of the common methods of contemporary party warfare. "You set up the Church and Sacheverell against us; and we set up trade and the Pretender against you";[1] so said,

[1] *The behaviour of the Queen's last Ministry*, Swift, *Works*, v. 313.

with much frankness, a person in great employment to Swift. For a party policy such as this it was necessary that suggestions and insinuations of disloyalty should be spread abroad. To these, collected in memoirs and biographies, too much weight is apt to be attached in succeeding centuries.

Not a little has been made of a statement by the Duc de Berwick that the Abbé Gaultier brought him definite propositions from Harley for the succession of the Pretender after the death of Anne. But nothing is clearer than that the Berwick Memoirs must be scrutinised closely before they are accepted as historical authority. Berwick thus begins his account: "A la fin de 1710 l'Abbé Gaultier, dont la cour de France se servit pour traiter en sécret de la paix avec l'Angleterre, vint me trouver à St. Germain de la part du Comte d'Oxford, nouvellement fait grand trésorier."[1] But Harley was not Earl of Oxford and Lord Treasurer until May 1711. In this passage there is, therefore, a radical confusion, throwing suspicion on the whole narrative, which throughout has the appearance of a vague summary written at some time long after the years of which it tells. A little later, the narrative says—

"Après ces préliminaires, nous entrâmes dans le détail des moyens de parvenir au but; mais

[1] *Mémoires du Maréchal du Berwick*, Petitot Collection, lxvi. 219.

l'abbé ne put pour cette première fois entrer dans un grand détail, attendu que le trésorier ne lui avait pas encore bien expliqué ses intentions, que même préalablement à tout il fallait que la paix fût conclue; sans quoi le ministère présent n'oserait entamer une matière si délicate a ménager."

But if nothing could be done until peace was concluded, one object of which was the safeguarding of the Hanoverian succession, and the carrying out of the Act of Settlement, it is obvious that Harley never made any real proposals to the Duc de Berwick. Gaultier's business was to collect information, and it is probable that he constantly placed on vague conversations definite meanings which they were never intended to convey.

If the evidence of Harley's Jacobite intrigues was confined to such statements as those of Gaultier and to current rumours, it would scarcely be worthy of a moment's consideration. It has, however, been stated that while he was in the Tower he communicated directly with the Pretender. This assertion rests on a passage in a letter from Harley among the Stuart papers, which Sir James Macintosh appears to have seen, but which has since disappeared. That Harley should have written this letter is highly improbable. His position at the moment was so powerless—he had no partisans to please, no office to retain—it was so

essential for his safety at that time not to endanger his chance of liberty, that it is difficult to believe he would venture on so dangerous a course. At that very moment, also, he was assuring his relatives of his innocence and of his honour. On 13th April 1716 he wrote to his brother Nathaniel at Aleppo—

"I begin a letter to my dearest brother, though I do not know that my weak hand will obey my heart enough to write more than a very few lines. You may be sure I have received the frequent intelligence of your coming home with that joy that can only be conceived by those who love each other so entirely, that I know you will not be displeased to receive a few lines from me, even out of this place. I have been here since 16th July 1715, and desire only to come out with the same honour, the same innocency, as I came in. I know I have served my country successfully and usefully, my Queen faithfully, and observed the laws religiously and strictly, to which I have not only the testimony of my own conscience, but the applause of nine parts in ten of the nation, so that I will not exchange my integrity and a prison for the mind and the power of some others." [1]

Then on March 23rd, 1716, he writes to his brother Edward—

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 521.

". . . nothing is more notoriously known than my uniform conduct without trepidation in the two preceding reigns for the service of the present Royal Family; and the success has satisfied all that I foretold them and their Ministers. . . . I never had the least view in anything I did for the promoting the Protestant succession for my own private advantage; my only motive was that I thought it was for the good of my country."[1]

To his wife, a homely woman who seldom went near the Court, he said—

". . . as I look for no favour, so I shall do nothing towards my freedom that may not become the character of an English gentleman, and I will go out of this place with the same honour and innocence as I came into it."

In other private and confidential communications Harley emphatically denied that he had schemed for the return of the Pretender, a denial, the truth of which is confirmed by the fact that even in April 1714 the credulous Gaultier was in doubt of the Lord Treasurer's intentions, and that in the previous February Berwick had written to James that Harley in his conversations with Ormonde "never would come to determination, though pressed very home by the other."[2]

These two instances are the strongest which

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 530. [2] Hist. MSS. Com.: *Stuart Paper*, i. 294.

have been advanced against Harley, and they show the danger of relying too much on mere biographical relics; we must look rather to his character and policy. By temperament he was the last man in the world to plunge into anything in the nature of a plot, while all his family sympathies and his early training were such as to make him an anti-Jacobite. Again and again he had openly declared to the Elector his zeal for, and his "inviolable attachment" to, the Hanoverian succession.[1] His expressions were never more emphatic than in 1714, when Baron Schutz, the Hanoverian Envoy, demanded a Writ of Summons to the House of Lords for the Electoral Prince by virtue of his peerage as Duke of Cambridge. He seized the opportunity to reiterate his attachment to the house of Hanover. Writing to his cousin, Thomas Harley, then English Envoy at Hanover, he said, "I have thus sincerely opened my heart to you, and out of the warmest zeal for the interest of that serene house, I beg you will lay this before His Electoral Highness, to whom with my humblest duty you may give the utmost assurances mortal man is capable of doing. I will do my utmost to calm things here. It is the mutual interest of the Queen and the Elector to have a firm friendship, and that the world should know it so."[2] It is impossible

[1] *E.g.* Harley to Elector, Oct. 5–16, 1711, Stowe MS., 224, p. 178.
[2] *Harley Papers*, iii. 418 (13th April 1714).

not to contrast these statements in Harley's own handwriting, so open and so uncompromising, with the vague gossip upon which so much unjustified reliance has hitherto been set. The character of his policy and his political position as leader of the Tory party, the left wing of which was Jacobite, required that he should from time to time make some show of Jacobite sympathies. Still it is astonishing that men could have been so long duped; "that which was most wonderful in all this part was," says De Foe, "that the whole body of the Jacobites in Britain were capable of being imposed upon to such a degree, and that it was possible the Staff could use them as tools to such a length and not take one real step in their favour, as it is certain he never did; and yet they should be so stupid, as that to the last four months or thereabouts to believe him in their interest."[1] But as the Whigs and the Elector's advisers were certainly suspicious of him, it is clear that he played this dangerous game with a realism sufficient not only to fool the Jacobites, but to negative his efforts to stand well with the Elector. "It is true," wrote Bothmar, the Hanoverian

[1] *The Secret History of the White Staff*, ii. 12. This pamphlet contains an elaborate defence and explanation of Harley's conduct, but he did not, openly at least, favour it. "The Whigs brag in print they caused the two books of the *White Staff* to be written, and the policy is plain. He ought to be treated as a fool who had the Staff, if he ever encouraged a vindication."—Harley to Dr. W. Stratford (?), 23rd November 1714.

Envoy, in July 1714, "the Treasurer receives me very well, but the question is if he is sincere."[1]

No more elaborate and remarkable political trickery—"the most exquisite piece of management that has been acted by any Minister of State in this or the last age," is De Foe's delicate description—is to be found in the history of English politics. Harley's action is the more striking because it was that not of a bad man or a vicious statesman, but of one who was actuated by honourable principles, and by a desire to serve his country, who had little or nothing to gain by remaining in office, and everything to lose should a charge of treason be brought against him. To act so as to hold the good opinion of the moderate members of two opposite parties, was an impossibility under the circumstances of that particular time. To show a desire for the Hanoverian succession, to engage in schemes for a political union with Halifax, and at the same time to affect sympathy with the Pretender, was to carry a difficult political intrigue to a point which could hardly fail to result in political disaster. But whatever we may think of Harley's methods, they were not treasonable, and when he regarded himself as an ill-used man it is impossible to doubt the genuineness of the feeling. Certainly, too, the Jacobitism of the Tory party in England has been exaggerated, for there is no

[1] *Macpherson Papers*, ii. 633.

evidence of any real and practical scheme for the restoration of the Pretender. If he could have returned to the throne under a new parliamentary title, or if on an armed attempt considerable popular enthusiasm had been shown for his cause, there were many who would have welcomed him. There was much correspondence of an indefinite kind with France, and expressions of sympathy were constantly conveyed across the Channel; but of any bold and thorough scheme to place the son of James II. on the throne there is no sign.

It may be doubted even whether Bolingbroke, who in 1714 had become the real leader of the Tories, had determined on his future action should the Queen remain alive. We know that he had decided to construct a strong Tory Government and fortify it in the country. Having accomplished —if he could—that object, there were two courses open to him: either to be content to remain in power as head of a Tory Administration, accepting the Act of Settlement, or to endeavour to make use of his supremacy to bring back the Pretender before the Queen died. The only reason for this latter policy was that if James were on the throne Bolingbroke's personal authority would be more assured and more considerable than under the Elector; and his ambition and love of power were so remarkable that it is a reason to which weight must be attached. If, on the other hand,

the Queen were to die before the Act of Settlement was repealed, the new King would at any rate be received by a Tory Ministry who would take good care to capture the inexperienced sovereign, and would be able to retain their places at the beginning of another reign. Bolingbroke, unlike Harley, was free from Whig associations and Whig principles, and he might well believe that from a purely Tory vantage point the game in either eventuality was in his hands. His plans failed because he lacked Harley's sagacious understanding both of public opinion and public men, and had not the personal authority, the clear sight, and the vigorous determination to dominate a crisis. Whether, however, we consider the policy and position of Harley or of Bolingbroke—or indeed of any prominent member of the Tory party—it should never be forgotten that for party purposes no charge by the Whigs was so effective as an accusation of Jacobitism. Unless the Elector and the English people were effectually prejudiced against the advisers of the Queen, there was always a danger that they might remain in office under a new sovereign; and that danger was painfully present to the minds of the Whigs whenever they reflected on Harley and on his remarkable career.

Before finally passing away from the period of Harley's imprisonment, it should be noted how he was the last statesman to hold high office, and to find

himself in the Tower. Thus he is unquestionably a link between the old and the new political systems. At the very moment when English parties were assuming their modern forms, the statesman who more than any other of the age was democratic in his sensitiveness to public opinion, became a victim to the methods of the pre-revolutionary era, set in motion by party leaders and from party bitterness.

The circumstances in which Harley's last years in office were passed were so exceptional and so dramatic, that the little which remained to him of political life after his release from the Tower in 1717 appears tame and commonplace. From the moment when he reached the peerage, his quiet energy had abated, and a certain dilatoriness of mind and action characterised the last period of his administration. In retirement this inertia increased, and after 1717 Harley seldom took any part in current politics. In 1718 he spoke in the debate on the state of the coinage,[1] and a few weeks later opposed the Mutiny Bill[2] of the Ministry, basing his opposition to it both on the constitutional ground that courts martial were inconsistent with civil liberty, and on the practical reason that the number of men asked for by the Government was too large from a political and financial point of view. Walpole was at first a leading opponent of the measure, and in the dissensions of the Whigs one may probably perceive

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, vii. 533.

[2] *Parl. Hist.*, vii. 538.

the real cause of this parliamentary attack on a Bill which was easily capable of defence, since a standing army could not be governed by the common law, and in numbers a reduction had been made. But a statesman who had been kept by his opponents for two years in the Tower could scarcely be expected to lose this opportunity, especially in an age when party spirit was so strong. The Peerage Bill introduced by Sunderland and Stanhope in the following year was a more fitting object of opposition, and the vigour with which Harley attacked it seemed to suggest that he was about to take again an active part in contemporary politics. By this measure a radical change in the constitution was proposed, not for constitutional reasons, but for the purposes of party safety; for the Whigs were alarmed, lest on the accession to the throne of the Prince of Wales an unlimited creation of peers should, as in 1712, overthrow their power in that House of Parliament where they were strongest. The object of it was to prevent the increase of the existing number of English peers by more than six, though it permitted the creation of a new on the extinction of an old peerage. It shortened the tenure of future peerages by limiting them to the grantees and the heirs male of their body. It proposed to replace the sixteen elective peers of Scotland by twenty-five hereditary noblemen. It would necessarily have resulted in

an alteration of the character of the English peerage, which would have become a caste apart from and ceasing to be replenished by the middle classes. Harley had every motive to oppose it: he had seen the utility, as a political mechanism, of the royal prerogative to create peers, and had used it on the popular side. As one of those who had passed from the ranks of the landed gentry to the House of Peers, he could recognise the value of the existing constitution; as a Tory and a party politician, he might not be without hope that, after the secession of Walpole and Townshend from the Ministry in 1717, a union of dissatisfied Whigs with the Tories might replace him in power. Thus, from the moment this constitutional question was pressed on the attention of Parliament, he opposed it actively,[1] not only in Parliament but in the

[1] The following are the steps of this measure:—

1719

28th Feb. The Duke of Somerset moved and the Duke of Argyll seconded that a day be appointed for the House to be in Committee to take into consideration the present state of the peerage of Great Britain. This motion was opposed by the Earl of Oxford.

2nd March. Message from the King relinquishing his prerogative of creating peers.

4th March. Resolutions embodying the principle of the Bill were passed by 83 to 30.

March–April. Bill passed first and second readings, and not further proceeded with.

25th Nov. Bill again introduced and passed in the House of Lords.

8th Dec. Bill rejected in the Commons on motion that it be committed.

country. "Above an hundred peers in Scotland," wrote Lord Balmerino to him on the 16th of March 1719, "owe your Lordship humble thanks."[1]

Though unable in the House of Peers to prevent the progress of this measure, Harley's efforts were certainly not without influence in the country; and though it was to Walpole and the House of Commons that the destruction of the Bill was finally due, the late Lord Treasurer's conduct at this juncture must always be placed to his credit as a patriotic statesman.

But the rejection of this Bill did not overthrow the Government; on the contrary, it apparently strengthened the position of Stanhope and Sunderland, since it induced them to bring back Walpole and Townshend to their Administration. Thus any hope which Harley might have had of securing some kind of Tory-Whig combination fell to the ground. On May 16th, Harley had written, "I congratulate the time being come that the wolf dwells with the lamb, and the leopard lies down with the kid. These are very happy prognostics." But the omens were fallacious, and at the end of the year Harley was definitely and finally without hope of office.

In his retirement—sometimes in Herefordshire, sometimes at Wimpole — he more and more became isolated from that public life in which he

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 58.

had lately taken so noteworthy a part. In 1720, when the minds of men were engrossed with the South Sea Company, then so rapidly falling to ruin, some efforts seem to have been made to induce him to come to London and save the situation. The public originator of the scheme, many looked to him for assistance in this time of trouble; but he could have done nothing, and he did do nothing. Speculation and avarice must have their necessary results, and any effort to stay the course of events would, he thought, be unavailing.

And so he lived on quietly, his leisure occupied with country life, or broken by a rare visit to London, interested in his own and his brother's family, content with his bowls and his books, and with watching the increase of that library which to many is his most enduring monument.

Considerably removed from the centre of political and literary activity, he yet kept up some intercourse with his former associates, though his growing indolence, arising from bad health, made him rather a receiver than a giver of correspondence. Bromley—one of the pillars of the High Church party—who had served with him in his Administration, had time to write to him pessimistic letters on the state of affairs. Prior occasionally corresponded with him. The accomplished diplomatist and poet, in bad health, not overburdened with money, an exile from political life, found in Harley's

family the solace of his later years; Wimpole, the house of Harley's eldest son, was more a home to him than his own Down Hall. "I do not think myself," he says on 23rd December 1720, "more sensibly obliged to Lord Harley for any favour I have lately received from him than for the news he gives me of your being better as to your health, and to those wishes which he daily makes with the piety of an excellent son. I know you will give me leave to add mine, with the sincerity of a faithful friend. I have almost wintered here, and indeed have been detained for a month past by an indisposition which kept me within doors, which was the only trouble I found from the illness, for your son has treated me with kindness, which prevented me asking anything, and with a freedom which made me think I was in Duke Street, at Prior's own palace. I am going thither in three or four days, and shall not stir from thence till either you come towards Lincoln's Inn or Lord Harley to Dover Street, for I am frightened with the roaring of the South Sea, and tired with the madness of the people. . . . This is the world, my Lord, and the same tricks are played in Courts and camps, universities and hospitals, and so men act and have acted, for the proof which your Lordship and your humble servant need not read much history. There are some exceptions to this rule, but I think I might name them all without

writing to the bottom of the page; but I am tired with the thought, and will quit it for a pleasanter, which is that of telling you we are all in perfect good health. My Lord, Yours, Mathew."[1]

In less than a year—on September 18th, 1721—this accomplished and versatile man died at Wimpole. "His death," wrote Lord Harley to Humphrey Wanley, "is of great trouble to us all here, but I have this satisfaction, that nothing was wanting to preserve his life."

Swift sometimes wrote to him. In political misfortune he had stood staunchly by his patron. Five days after being committed to the Tower, Harley had received from him a letter which began: "It may look an idle or officious thing in me to give your Lordship any interruption under your present circumstances; yet I could never forgive myself if, after being treated with the greatest kindness and distinction by a person of your Lordship's virtue, I should omit making you at this time the humblest offers of my poor service and attendance." Distance, engrossment in Irish affairs, the absence of reciprocal communication, did not, as time elapsed, lessen the fidelity of this friendship.[2]

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 610.

[2] Sir Henry Craik suggests that Harley, in obtaining only the Deanery of St. Patrick (1713) for Swift, had shown ingratitude for his services: "Swift was vexed at the vacillation, at the strain which a return so much under his deserts had called for. The picture of

MATTHEW PRIOR

After a picture by Thomas Hudson from a portrait by Jonathan Richardson in the National Portrait Gallery

"Bussy Rabutin,"—Swift thus wrote from Dublin on 6th November 1723,—"in his exile of twenty years writ every year a letter to the King, only to keep himself in memory, but never received an answer. This hath been my fortune, and yet I love you better than ever I did, and I believe you do not love me worse. I ever gave great allowance to the laziness of your temper in the article of writing letters, but I cannot pardon your forgetfulness in sending me your picture. If you were still a first Minister, I would hardly excuse your promise of nine years; I will be revenged, I will put Lord Harley, nay, I will put Lady Harriet, upon you. Mr. Minet hath sometimes made me uneasy with his accounts of your health; but he and the public papers being silent in that particular, I am in hopes it is established again. I am recovering mine by riding, in hopes to get enough one summer to attend you at Brampton Castle, for I have a thousand things to say to you in relation to somewhat *quod et hunc in annum vivat et plures.* Be so kind in two lines to invite me to your house; you asked me once when you governed Europe whether I was ashamed of your company; I ask you now whether you are ashamed of mine. It is vexatious

timidity, shuffling, and ingratitude on the part of Oxford is not a pleasant one" (*Life of Swift*, p. 261). Harley seems to have done the best he could for Swift, and the latter, if not satisfied, was certainly not displeased with Harley.

that I, who never made court to you in your greatness, nor ask anything from you, should be now perpetually teasing for a letter and a picture. While you were Treasurer you never refused me when I solicited for others; why in your retirement will you always refuse me when I solicit for myself? I want some friend like myself near you to put you out of your play. In my conscience I think that you, who were the humblest of men in the height of power, are grown proud by adversity, which I confess you have borne in such a manner that if there be any reason why a mortal should be proud, you have it all on your side. But I, who am one of those few who never flattered or deceived you when you were in a station to be flattered and deceived, can allow no change of conduct with regard to myself, and I expect as good treatment from you as if you were still first minister. Pray, my Lord, forgive me this idle way of talk, which you know was always my talent, and yet I am very serious in it, and expect you will believe me, and write to me soon, and comply with everything I desire. It is destined that you should have great obligations to me, for who else knows how to deliver you down to posterity, though I leave you behind me? Therefore make your court and use me well, for I am to be bribed, though you never were. I pray God preserve you and your illustrious family (for I hope that title is not confined to

'Germanes'), and that you may live to save your country a second time."[1]

But in those days Herefordshire and Ireland were far apart, and Swift and Harley were never to meet again; for little more than six months later, on May 21st, 1724, Harley, whose health had for some time been failing, died during one of his short visits to London at a house in Albemarle Street. His body was borne to Brampton, and laid in the quiet churchyard with his worthy fathers. Within the church a marble tablet was placed to his memory, on which are narrated the chief events in his life, and on which the four last lines of Pope's famous dedication are inscribed as an epitaph. "His friendship and conversation," wrote Swift to the new Earl,[2] on hearing of his death, "you will ever want, because they are qualities so rare in the world, and in which he so much excelled all others." Harley could not have asked for a more pleasing epitaph, and, a little overstrained though it may be,

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 636.

[2] Harley had by his first wife: Edward, Lord Harley (1689–1741), who married Henrietta Cavendish, daughter of John, first Duke of Newcastle; Elizabeth, who married the third Duke of Leeds; and Abigail, who married the seventh Earl of Kinnoul. The title became extinct on the death of Alfred, sixth Earl of Oxford, in 1853. The estates devolved on his sister, Lady Langdale, and on her death in 1872, Robert William Daker Harley, a direct descendant of Sir Bryan de Harley, son of Sir Robert de Harley. See p. 6.

Harley's second wife (marriage Oct. 1694) was Sarah, hitherto said to be daughter of Simon Middleton, but see *Harley Papers*, i. 552, 554 (widow?). See *ante*, p. 13.

it stated with truth his most agreeable characteristic. It is the last word in a personal union which exhibits in Swift a constant heart and an independent spirit, in Harley the recognition of genius, of tried and invaluable services, and of a friendship which was unbroken in good fortune and in adversity.

Harley's courage and patience, his good temper and absence of pride and affectation, were very attractive to Swift, and no one had better opportunities of perceiving them. To us it is as a politician that he is chiefly interesting. With many of the characteristics of the modern Liberal, perceptive of popular forces and of the value of the Press, he lived in an age of transition, when other influences had still to be carefully considered—the wishes of the Queen, the persistence and union of the Whig party, the hopes and fears of men who favoured the Stuarts or the house of Hanover, an element in party politics which has never since existed. He was always a friend of civil and religious liberty, and in his opposition to a large standing army under William III., even in his vacillation as to the Schism Bill,—events at the beginning and the end of his career,—we see this political conviction in imperfect but real action.

In the history of English parties Harley holds a unique place, for he was the first party leader in the modern political understanding of the term, and he was, from the fall of Godolphin to a few days

before the death of Anne, acknowledged as their chief by every one of the Tories, not excepting Bolingbroke. On the other side, no statesman was in the same position, for the Whigs were led by a group of noblemen, not one of whom would have admitted the supremacy of the other; and it was not until Walpole had attained to a position of undoubted authority over the Whigs, that any leader held a distinct personal ascendancy over Harley's former opponents. Harley, too, was the first, but not the last, of those chiefs of the Tory party who, while acknowledged as their leader, has had singularly little sympathy with the bulk of his followers.

Sprung from the landed gentry and a land-owner himself, and well acquainted with the wants and the wishes of the rural population, he was yet in sympathy with the commercial aspirations of the country, occupying for a time the chief place in the most important commercial corporation of the age. Indeed, throughout the whole of Harley's career, we are constantly reminded of the expansion of Great Britain: we see it in the South Sea scheme, and in the capturing of the Assiento Contract, which, while it made England the chief slave-trading nation of the age, was a signal mark of her approaching commercial supremacy. It is visible, too, in her territorial enlargement, in the possession of Hudson Bay and Acadie, which were

valued by the nation for the opportunities they gave for the employment of increasing wealth and modern energy. They were steps in the evolution of England, growing from an insular kingdom to a world-wide power; and as in Harley we note a statesman perceptive above others of the influence of literature and journalism, so in him we also observe a mind alive to the needs of a growing commercial community.

Throughout his public life Harley was in favour of peace, of national economy, and of financial purity. His bitterest enemy never brought a charge against his uprightness in regard to money matters, whether public or private. Of this purity he could be justly proud, in an age when public men could and did secretly enrich themselves at the expense of the nation, and when such conduct was easily pardoned. So far, indeed, from becoming more wealthy by official life, Harley was actually poorer,[1] and we cannot find a single accusation against him in this respect, in memoirs, pamphlets, or party rhymes, in years when political enmity struck with personal weapons, when blame and praise were both strongly marked by exaggeration. "If a man was ever born under the necessity of being a knave, he was,"[2] is the acrid description of Harley which one of his most formidable Whig opponents has handed down to posterity. Against

[1] *Harley Papers*, iv. 208. See App. ii. [2] *Cowper's Diary*, p. 33.

it we may set Pope's praise of his philosophic tranquillity in retirement, which is as much too complimentary as Bolingbroke's posthumous and depreciatory damnation is unjust—

> "A soul supreme, in each hard instance try'd,
> Above all pain, all passion, and all pride;
> The rage of power, the blast of public breath,
> The lust of lucre, and the dread of death."

These fine lines are scarcely applicable to a statesman with a body and mind wearied by toilsome and anxious political life, who could no longer serve his country. Fortunate in his love of books and literature, in a united and sympathetic family, having sufficient means, country tastes, a high position, and a tranquil temperament, Harley could pass with contentment the last decade of life among the pleasant country scenes of Herefordshire, and in the library at Wimpole.

In looking back upon the life of a statesman, there is perceptible an obvious division between foreign and domestic affairs. For Englishmen, from the time when Harley's career commenced, there were two simple and opposite foreign policies: that of William III., which he bequeathed to the Whigs—by which, in his own words, England was to hold "the balance of Europe," and which, however gratifying to its pride, involved this country in continental disputes—and a policy of non-intervention, of regarding Great Britain primarily as a sea

power unconcerned with the disputes of Europe, unless they directly affected English interests. When Harley in 1697 opposed a large standing army, he commenced an adherence to the latter policy from which he never deviated, one practical result of which was the Treaty of Utrecht. It necessarily follows that, in the mind of a statesman holding such opinions, foreign questions must occupy a secondary place, and thus Harley appears to have had but a limited knowledge of, and no strong interest in, the details of continental affairs, and he has left no mark upon this department of Government. He took a far larger share in the management of the finances of the country. Though a careful administrator, he had neither the large mental outlook nor the daring to venture on schemes involving novelty. He was content with lotteries, land-taxes, and the excise, while the remarkable plan with which his name is connected, the South Sea Company, was not based on any new ideas of his own, and the practical application of those on which it was framed was probably due to the bolder mind of De Foe. As a domestic politician, Harley would in quiet times, and in an age when party feeling was less bitter, when the ethics of party warfare had become clearer, and when all doubts as to the succession to the throne had passed away, have gained a solid and lasting reputation; for, to employ an admirable phrase

of Bagehot's, he abounded in pacific discretion. By indefatigable labour and perseverance in a single career, fair abilities, a considerable capacity for business, remarkable tact, and an unusual gift for perceiving the drift of parliamentary and public opinion, with the assistance derived from the reputation of his family and from local position, he was enabled to reach a high political place. But a lifelong Whig by opinion and temperament, he became the head of a Tory Ministry, chiefly because that party was opposed to a war policy—in other words, was in favour of peace and retrenchment, the watchwords of the Whigs of a later generation. But when the Treaty of Utrecht, by producing a European peace, took from the Tories the element in their policy which was the bond of union between them and Harley, his position as head of that party was impossible and anomalous, and he lacked the boldness at once to break away from it. But for the war Harley could not have remained for so long the leader of the Tories. The desire for peace had, during its continuance, made party dissatisfaction harmless, but the moment this influence was removed party feeling caused Harley's position to become untenable. That their leader should try to carry into public affairs the Whig doctrines which Locke had enunciated in his Letters on Toleration, was an anomaly to which militant Tories could not submit.

Jealousy and fear of the Nonconformists—increasing as they were in wealth and influence—was the strongest idea in the Tory mind at the end of the reign of Queen Anne, and as the Church of England was as yet far too powerful to permit, for many years, the admittance of Nonconformists to all the privileges of citizenship, inevitable as in time that change might be, it was certain that for Harley even to temporise on this question made it impossible for him to continue as leader of the Tories. It is probable that Harley perceived the critical point in his political career at which he had arrived, but his failure to take the bold and, indeed, the only safe action, as we now see it was, resulted in his loss alike of his high office and, what was worse, of his political honour. And yet, whether he intended it or not, at this time and by action unfortunate for his reputation, he was doing England a service. He prevented Bolingbroke and the extreme Tories from carrying out schemes which, whether they were treasonable or not, would have greatly disturbed the tranquillity of the country. He so temporised with his colleagues and with the Pretender, that these plans were deferred, and the Elector succeeded peacefully to the throne. If Harley could have passed safely through the crisis of a new succession, it is not impossible that his close and friendly intercourse with Halifax would have resulted in

a union between himself and a statesman who was the least hostile of the Whigs to their opponents; and then Harley, had health permitted, might have had some years of tranquil power. Instead, not only did he find himself permanently excluded from office, but he became, as Bolingbroke said with bitter truth, "the object of the derision of the Whigs and of the indignation of the Tories." He tried, in an age of extreme political passions, to be tolerant and moderate, but his good intentions involved him in intrigues and political manœuvres, on which it has been his misfortune that history has dwelt to the exclusion of any appreciation of the sterling qualities which he certainly possessed, and of the difficulties of a career which was a perpetual dilemma; for he had not attained the capacity of the modern statesman, to deny some principles in order to obtain the effectuating of others. As has been well said of an incomparably greater man, "Nature had endowed him with a power of keeping his own counsel, that was sometimes to pass for dissimulation." This capacity, as well as his moderation, made men throughout his life doubtful of his good faith. His policy in the last years of office seemed to his contemporaries a confirmation of all the suspicions which had gathered round his career, and so gave him a reputation with posterity more evil than was deserved.

CHAPTER IX

THE BOOK-COLLECTOR. THE FRIEND OF MEN OF LETTERS

HARLEY'S TASTE FOR COLLECTING BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS—A FASHION OF THE AGE—HARLEY AS A SCHOLAR—HUMPHREY WANLEY—ADDITION OF THE D'EWES COLLECTION TO THE LIBRARY—ENLARGED BY EDWARD, EARL OF OXFORD—ITS DISPERSAL—THE MANUSCRIPTS PURCHASED FOR THE NATION—HARLEY'S FRIENDSHIP WITH MEN OF LETTERS—SWIFT, PRIOR, ARBUTHNOT, GAY—THE BROTHERS' CLUB—THE SCRIBLERUS CLUB—POLITICS AND LETTERS IN THE AGE OF ANNE.

SOME knowledge of the manner in which an eminent man occupies his hours of leisure helps to elucidate character, and sometimes throws light on motives. When we think of Burke sauntering thoughtfully and observantly over his farm at Beaconsfield, we more readily understand him; and when we recall the hot, mad midnight hours which Charles Fox so keenly enjoyed round the gambling tables in St. James' Street, we realise more clearly the nature of the ardent politician who gloried in debate. Nor shall we have completed a study of Robert Harley if we consider him only as a statesman; we must picture him carefully purchasing and laboriously perusing his

manuscripts. There is another reason, too, why his pastime interests this generation—it helped to create the national collection which now exists at the British Museum, which gives to his name a celebrity besides that which belongs to him as one of the first party leaders of the eighteenth century.

To the collecting of rare books and manuscripts Harley brought the same perseverance, the same choice of competent assistants, as to his political business; and in his taste for topographical and antiquarian works is visible the early ardour for documentary research that enabled him to become a high authority on parliamentary history and precedents. Among his books Harley found recreation, and while Godolphin passed his leisure in watching his horses on Newmarket Heath, his successor was creating the collection of which the manuscripts were hereafter to become the property of the English people. In this pursuit Harley was not singular, since in his day it was a fashion of the aristocracy and higher clergy. At Althorp the Earl of Sunderland, Harley's most bitter political antagonist, brought together a costly library; and students even complained that the Quality, for their pleasure, purchased literary and antiquarian rarities at a price beyond the means of poor men who needed them for the purpose of their work. It was a characteristic feature of a society which,

whatever may have been its political faults, appreciated and cultivated letters and intellectual alertness; but it was a pastime which existed only so long as English art continued in comparative abeyance. When, towards the middle of the century, the abundant fertility of the genius of Reynolds and Gainsborough placed delightful pictures at the disposal of those who had a cultivated taste and a long purse, the vogue for the collecting of rare books gave way before an amusement with which the formation of a library could not compete. The enjoyments of Harley and Bolingbroke, of Sunderland and Halifax, were in marked contrast to the coarse pleasures of succeeding reigns, which culminated in the gambling rooms in St. James' Street, where Charles Fox kept a faro bank at the end of the century. We must look across the Channel, to the Paris of D'Alembert and the Duc de Choiseuil, of President Hénault and Montesquieu, for a similar combination of letters, politics, and pleasure. But Harley was no mere heedless follower of a fashion; even in the darkest hours of life he happily found relief in his manuscripts, and during his long imprisonment in the Tower busied himself with genealogical inquiries to which they gave rise.[1] Yet the more his life is studied, the more remarkable does this taste appear. He had no literary gifts, though he dabbled in rhyme,

[1] Dartmouth MSS., Hist. MSS., Corres. 11th Rep. App. pt. v. 324.

and—not to be behind the times—wrote trifling verses, which one must suppose he regarded as having some merit, since they were shown to Swift and Bolingbroke, and Gay and Pope. Nor in his early years are there any traces of a tendency towards scholarship observable in his letters, and his life was never that of a student. Before he became a member of Parliament in 1689, he passed his time busy in the conduct of local affairs in Herefordshire; yet by the year 1701 he was well known as a bibliophile and patron of authors. "I have been in Oxford," wrote Dr. George Hickes[1] to him, "where all learned men have a particular esteem and veneration for you,"[2] and it was even regarded as an honour to be allowed to dedicate erudite works to him. And though from the moment that he entered Parliament he devoted himself to its business with unusual assiduity, yet by the year 1708 he had found leisure enough to amass so large a collection, that it became necessary to obtain the services of the most capable librarian in the kingdom to catalogue and to take charge of his books and manuscripts.

Servile as were then many scholars and dignitaries of the universities before a public man, and

[1] 1642–1715, non-juror—a learned divine, and author of the great *Linguarum veterum septentrionalium Thesaurus*.

[2] *Harley Papers*, ii. 21.

lavish as were their often empty compliments, it cannot be doubted that Harley had managed to accumulate a considerable store of learning. We may safely place him in a position between Swift's "perfect master of the learned languages" and Bolingbroke's "no great scholar." That Harley should ever have become even a moderate scholar is evidence of remarkable perseverance, quiet energy, and an inherent desire for knowledge. Such erudition as he gained by formal teaching in youth he had little time to increase when he became absorbed in public life; yet without a university education, never favoured by the agreeable tranquillity of a college library, he acquired, even in the opinion of the most critical of his contemporaries, no mean reputation for learning. A successful collector of books need not be an exact scholar, but without considerable attainments there can be little pleasure in a library created by the labour of competent assistants; and that Harley throughout his life found enjoyment in his books and manuscripts, there is not the smallest doubt.

Harley obviously began to collect books at an early age, since in April 1701, the year in which he became Speaker, Humphrey Wanley[1] was

[1] Humphrey Wanley, 1672–1726. Born at Coventry. In 1695 matriculated at S. Edmund Hall, Oxford, proceeding subsequently to University College. At twenty-three compiled catalogues of MSS. of Coventry School and the Church of S. Mary at Warwick.

HUMPHREY WANLEY, F.R.S., F.S.A.

From a mezzotint after a picture by Thomas Hill

introduced to him. "This gentleman," wrote Dr. George Hickes in the letter of introduction, "is Mr. Wanley of whom I spoke to you. He has the best skill in ancient hands and MSS. of any man not only of this, but I believe of any former age, and I wish for the sake of the public that he might meet with the same public encouragement here that he would have met with in France, Holland, or Sweden, had he been born in any of these countries."[1] This praise was not exaggerated. Apprenticed to a draper in Coventry, Wanley, when a youth, had turned to the study and to the translation of ancient documents with the eagerness which an English boy usually reserves for his games. He was a man such as Harley liked—trusty, full of knowledge and genial, keen at a bargain, and not averse to carry it through in a tavern over a bottle of wine. Throughout his life he showed an unquenchable enthusiasm for seeking out, verifying, and obtaining rare books and manuscripts, and the toil of compiling a catalogue was an unfailing pleasure to one who united in himself the characters of a man of business and a scholar. In his shrewd

In 1696 became assistant-librarian in the Bodleian Library, and in 1702 secretary to Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. In 1708 he was appointed library keeper to the Earl of Oxford, in 1707 he was one of some antiquarians whose meetings were the origin of the Society of Antiquaries.

[1] *Harley Papers*, ii. 16.

eyes and rough features one could read his character.

In 1706 an important addition was made to the library by the purchase for £500 of the valuable though rather too voluminous collection which had been created more than half a century before by that untiring antiquary Sir Simon D'Ewes, and by the year 1715 that portion of Harley's library which he had from time to time purchased, and exclusive of the many gifts which he had received, was worth, according to Wanley's computation, £4573.[1] At this time a large part of the collection seems to have been at Wimpole, the house of Lord Harley, of which he had become the owner by his marriage with the daughter and heiress of the Duke of Newcastle. Even when he was at Oxford, Edward Harley was entrusted by his father with the earlier transactions for the acquisition of books and manuscripts,[2] whilst during the latter part of Harley's life he largely relinquished the charge of the library to his son, for whom Wanley was continually adding to the collection, being in constant correspondence with Lord Harley in regard to its arrangement and enlargement. In the second Earl of Oxford the interest of his father in collecting, at once intelligent and judicious, degenerated into a foolish and an extravagant habit. Inheriting

[1] *Harley Papers*, iii. 514.
[2] *Harley Papers*, iv. 41.

Robert Harley's good-nature, his son was without his judgment and his business capacity. He collected heedlessly and at great cost books, manuscripts, and curios. At the same time he had four mansions to pay for,—his house in London, Brampton, Wimpole, and Down Hall,—and so it came to pass that he died in 1741 deeply in debt.

The dispersal to the four corners of the earth of a collection, whether of books or pictures, the growth of which a man has watched day by day and year by year, affords admirable opportunity for the moralist, and there is something sad in seeing—common sight though it is—the results of the labour of years scattered in a day. Fortunately, this was not wholly the fate of Harley's collection. Passing into the possession of Lady Oxford on her husband's death, she decided to dispose of it, and the books were in 1742 sold by her to Osborne the bookseller for £13,000; less, it is said, than the cost of the binding. For Harley liked to have his books well bound, and he enjoyed seeing his shelves filled with handsome volumes. His favourite cover was red morocco, enriched by a broad border of gold; the material he sometimes supplied himself. But the indulgence of this expensive taste added greatly to the cost of the library, even though it was under the charge of Wanley, who did not hesitate to bargain with the binders. The books were gradually dispersed; but the manuscripts for some years remained in the

possession of Lady Oxford, until in 1753 they were bought from her for £10,000, by the trustees who were nominated and empowered by Parliament to buy the collection of Sir Hans Sloane[1] and the Harleian Manuscripts and to erect for them "one general repository." These two libraries and the Cottonian Manuscripts, acquired in 1700 and transferred to the. new trustees in 1753, formed the nucleus for that national library which has unceasingly increased, and which in its inception was based not a little on the manuscripts of which many were collected by Robert Harley as the recreation of an anxious and laborious public life.

Harley's great collection and the final home of a large part of it have resulted in preserving his name in the memory of many generations of the English-speaking race, and have given him a vague posthumous fame as a patron and a friend of men of letters. This, though not undeserved, may easily be exaggerated; for though a lifelong collector, the period during which he was the centre of a famous literary society was short. Without also denying Harley's intelligent interest in literature, it was mainly owing to his political position that he was brought in contact with a brilliant group of remarkable men, who found in politics a livelihood and in politicians patrons, men wholly different from the antiquarians and the collectors, who were constantly

[1] 26 George II. c. 22.

in communication with him. Harley's connection with De Foe, as has been told in previous pages, was purely political, but both Prior and Swift from political assistants became intimate personal friends, and have added much to the importance of Harley's life. The contrast of the characters of Swift and Harley gives not a little piquancy to their association; for Swift was as egotistical as Rousseau, restless, irritable, and susceptible, shaken by gusts of anger and emotion at which Harley must often have smiled as he answered him in his slow, hesitating way, pondering the effect of Swift's suggestions on the politicians whose divergent views he had so constantly to reconcile. It was characteristic of Harley's common good-nature to offer Swift, in a moment of forgetfulness, fifty pounds as if he were De Foe or Mrs. Manley. It was like Swift to resent the well-meant kindness of his patron, and to refuse to go near his house till Harley had apologised for offering a gift which had never been asked. But Harley was the last man to be vexed at this show of independence, which must have amused him; for no one knew better than he how dependent the best party publicists were on high officials.

The able writers who were serving the Tory party were eager for a reward in some form or other, and when they received it in the shape of an appointment they generally regarded it as less

than they deserved, and a demand for money sometimes followed.

"I'm no more to converse with the swains,
But go where fine people resort;
One can live without money on plains,
But never without it at Court.

If when with the swains I did gambol,
I arrayed me in silver and blue;
When abroad and in Courts I shall ramble,
Pray, my Lord, how much money will do?"

There are many ways of begging, and one could not well be asked more agreeably than in these lines, in which Gay, when he was appointed through Harley's good offices secretary to Lord Clarendon's mission to Hanover (1714), suggested to the Lord Treasurer that a present would at the moment be very acceptable.[1]

De Foe did not mince matters in this fashion; he expected to be paid, and when the money did not come promptly, he asked for it. He would have taken the fifty pounds which Swift refused without ado, and we like him all the better for his sincerity.

[1] Gay's request for money so pleasantly placed before the Lord Treasurer was evidently without effect, for among the Welbeck papers is the following note from Gay: "1714, June 10.—Your Lordship's continued goodness towards me makes me presume to remind you of your shepherd's petition. My Lord Clarendon tells me he sends his things down the water to-morrow and embarks on Saturday. The time to provide myself is very short, but I submit myself entirely to your Lordship's will and pleasure, and now attend your commands."—*Harley Papers*, iii. 457.

JOHN GAY

From an unfinished sketch by Sir Godfrey Kneller in the National Portrait Gallery

For Harley knew quite well that behind this outward pride of Swift's existed the desire for a reward greater than a sum of money. He was well aware, too, how in the age of Anne literary success depended not a little on the patronage of a nobleman. It was as a patron that Harley was first interested in Pope. At his suggestion and that of the Duke of Shrewsbury, Pope versified the Satires of Donne, a fact which years after its occurrence he was careful to state; for no writer ever had a more business-like mind. "Pardon me," he once wrote to Gay, "if I add a word of advice in the poetical way," and that advice was—"write something on the king or prince or princess." And thus, while it pleased statesmen to believe that they could suggest themes to an author, the belief was still more agreeable to the writer, since it enlisted in his favour the influence of powerful patrons. It was a practice which, though it seemed derogatory to the self-respect of a man of letters, was well understood to be simply a form of advertisement. No one took it very seriously, and its purpose was achieved when it made known the work of an author to a rather limited public. The news-letter, the stage coach, and the patron were each of them necessary in the existing state of society.

Harley had a kindly temperament, and was without either pride or egotism. Nothing surprised Swift more than that at the very beginning of their

connection Harley should treat him like an old friend. The highest honours did not change his manner, and when Swift attended a levée soon after Harley became Lord Treasurer in 1711, "he whispered me," he writes in his *Journal to Stella*, "a jest or two, and bade me come to dinner."

To appreciate the society of the great writers who were gathered in London at the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was not necessary either to be an author or a man gifted with literary perception; no intelligent person with a knowledge of the world could fail to enjoy the companionship of the men who were grouped around the Lord Treasurer. Yet it is remarkable that this union, which is so famous, lasted, so far as Harley is concerned, for so short a time. De Foe, whose connection with him began, as we have told, in 1703, took no part in the literary gatherings in London. Swift did not know Harley before his introduction in 1710, and Swift and Dr. Arbuthnot,[1] who was the life and soul of the company, did not meet till 1711.

[1] John Arbuthnot, 1667–1735. Born at Arbuthnot, Kincardineshire. In 1689 took the degree of Doctor of Medicine at St. Andrews. He came to London and gave lessons in mathematics; from 1697–1700 published various scientific works. In 1704 Arbuthnot was elected Fellow of the Royal Society, in 1705 Physician Extraordinary to the Queen, and in 1710 was admitted a Fellow of the College of Physicians. In 1712 he published *Law is a Bottomless Pit, or the History of John Bull.* He was the main if not the exclusive author of the Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus, first published in an edition of Pope's *Works* in 1714. In his last years he wrote more scientific and medical works.

No doubt Harley and Arbuthnot had been acquainted before this year, for on 30th October 1705, Arbuthnot had become Physician Extraordinary to the Queen. Though eminent in his profession, he doubtless owed his appointment not a little to his learning, humour, and agreeable character.

> "Preserve him cheerful, social, and serene,
> And just as rich as when he served a Queen,"

wrote Pope in a couplet admirably descriptive of this excellent man and of the qualities which tended to his advancement at Court. A distinguished physician, a scientific writer, and a wit who could produce so permanent a pamphlet as the *History of John Bull*, which gave to the Englishman a sobriquet which has become perpetual, he was valued by his friends as the most delightful of companions. But besides Swift and Arbuthnot, there were associated Gay,[1] then quite young, and but just beginning his odd life of mingled failure and success; and Parnell,[2] who was now a protégé of Swift's, and whom he introduced to

[1] John Gay, 1688–1732. Born at Barnstaple and educated at its Grammar School. In 1708 he published his first poem, "Wine"; in 1714, "The Fair and the Shepherd's Week." In the same year he became secretary to Lord Clarendon, the Envoy to the Court of Hanover, whose mission was ended by the death of the Queen. In 1716 "Trivia" was published, in 1727 "The Fables," and in 1728 the famous "Beggars' Opera."

[2] Thomas Parnell, 1679–1718. Born in Dublin, he was educated at Trinity College, ordained in 1700, and held various preferments. He inherited an estate in Armagh from his mother. He first visited

Harley in 1712. Pope, too, and Prior, with an acknowledged reputation as a diplomatist and a poet, were of the company. Just when Harley reached the height of his power in 1711, the individual intercourse of these kindred spirits became closer, and occasional meetings of the friends more frequent, and from that tendency to form political and social organisations which was to develop into the modern club, there grew an organised company. In June 1711 a club or society was formed, Tory in its politics, but not established directly for party purposes, of which the inner circle, with a mixture of pleasantry and affection, called each other brother.[1] Its founder was Bolingbroke, and, strangely enough, Harley was not elected to this company. "It seems," says Swift in his *Journal* (21st June 1711), "in my absence they had elected a club and made me one, and we made some laws to-day which I am to digest and add to against next meeting. Our meetings are to be every Tuesday: we are yet but twelve: Lord Keeper and Lord Treasurer were proposed: but I was against them and so was Mr. Secretary,[2] though their sons are of it, and so they are excluded. The end of our club is to advance conversation and friendship and to

London in 1706. The first collected edition of his poems was published in 1721.

[1] The society has consequently become known as the Brothers' Club.

[2] Bolingbroke.

reward deserving persons with our interest and recommendation. We take in none but men of wit or men of interest: and if we go on as we began, no other club in this town will be worth talking of." Bolingbroke described it in similar terms: "The improvement of friendship and the encouragement of letters are to be the two great ends of our society."[1] It met once a week, usually at some tavern. "Society day," notes Swift on 27th March 1712, "you know that, I suppose. Dr. Arbuthnot was President. His dinner was dressed in the Queen's kitchen, and was mighty fine. We ate at Ozinda's Chocolate House just by St. James'. We were never merrier nor better company, and did not part till after eleven . . . I met Lord Treasurer to-day at Lady Masham's. He would fain have carried me home to dinner. No, no. What! upon a society day!" Sometimes the members joined in a humbler repast at Arbuthnot's rooms or at Prior's house, to which Harley was invited—a fact suggestive of his tastes—

"Our weekly friends to-morrow meet,
At Matthew's palace, in Duke Street,
To try, for once, if they can dine
On bacon, ham, and mutton chine.
If, weary'd with the great affairs
Which Britain trusts to Harley's cares,
Thou, humble statesman, may'st descend
Thy mind one moment to unbend,

[1] Bolingbroke to the Earl of Orrery, 12th June 1711.—*Bolingbroke's Corresp.*, edited by Parke.

To see thy servant from his soul
Crown with thy health the sprightly bowl;
Among the guests which e'er my house
Received, it never can produce
Of honour a more glorious proof,
Though Dorset us'd to bless the roof."

Such was Prior's invitation to Harley to a dinner of the club, which gradually increased in numbers. Its repasts, too, became more costly. "Our society met to-day" (7th February 1712); "we have lessened our dinners, which were grown so extravagant that Lord Treasurer and everybody else cried shame." Harley was economical in private as in public matters, and we see his judicious influence here; but it could not avail much, for Ormond, Bathurst, and other noblemen who belonged to the club were not the men to dine frugally. It was enjoyable enough to listen to Swift and Prior demolish the Whigs over the dinner-table, or to hear Swift read his coming publications at dessert, but the evening was pleasanter when the dishes and the wine were as excellent as the company. Thus by the end of the year the club had grown too fashionable and too costly for some of its founders, and Swift was tired of it. "I propose (18th December) our meetings should be once a fortnight, for between you and me we do no good. It cost me nineteen shillings to-day for my club dinner; I don't like it." But the men of letters who were members of it were as close friends as ever—vivacity and wit and high

spirits were their natural gifts, and under the influence of this union of qualities there grew that unique literary and social companionship which has become famous as the Scriblerus Club. Yet stronger than the bond of intellectual was that of personal sympathy, appreciation of and pleasure in the attractive traits by which each friend was characterised—kindness, generosity, and open-heartedness. Common intellectual tastes and a common political interest would never alone have produced that true and kindly union which was the basis of the Scriblerus Club. And it certainly was not because of his interest in letters, or his power as head of the Tory party, that Harley was admitted to its meetings. For the society to which the Brothers' Club, as it has been called, with its singular union of men of letters and powerful noblemen, had given place was at once more intimate, more personal, and less formal, one to which a man was not elected unless he were liked. "Men of interest," who were to form one element in the larger club, were not wanted at its gatherings, but men of common sympathies; and it was because Harley possessed some of those agreeable qualities which tend to good fellowship—an equable and a cheerful temper, and a simple and kindly nature—that he became a friend of the writers with whom he mingled on equal terms, and who invited the Lord Treasurer to join them in their meetings without ceremony, and in

simple good comradeship, welcoming him not as their political chief, but as a pleasant and appreciative companion.

> "Then come and take part in
> The Memoirs of Martin,
> Lay by your white staff and grey habit;
> For trust us, friend Mortimer,
> Should you live years forty more,
> *Hoc olim meminisse juvabit.*"

Such is the concluding stanza of the lines sent to Harley and signed "by order of ye Club" by Pope, Gay, Swift, Arbuthnot, and Parnell, bidding him to their gatherings.[1]

The club itself was short-lived. We hear of it first in 1714, and it ceased on Harley's fall in the same year. The object of those members who were at once men of letters and intimate friends was to write a series of satires on pedantry and pretended learning. Some of this congenial task was accomplished, the principal result being the *Memoirs of Scriblerus*, of which the first book only was completed. To "ridicule all the false taste in learning, under the character of a man of capacity enough that had dropped into every art and science but injudiciously in each," was Pope's description of these memoirs. Probably written almost entirely by Arbuthnot, they were not published until 1741, and then among Pope's *Works*. The "Art of Sinking in Poetry," and "Straddling *versus* Stiles,"

[1] Aitken's *Life of Arbuthnot*, from the Longleat MSS., p. 56.

both in the same vein as the *Memoirs*, were originally published among *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* by Pope and Swift in 1727, whilst "An Essay of the Learned Martinus Scriblerus concerning the Origin of Sciences" appeared in another volume of the same work in 1732. In these satires, Pope, Swift, and Arbuthnot, as well as in some measure Parnell and Gay, had a hand. Harley may have given some hints, for, wrote Gay to Swift in June 1714, "we had the honour of the Treasurer's company last Saturday, when we sat upon Scriblerus."[1] This was the most critical time in Harley's career, and it must have been with a feeling of no little relief that he spent an evening with these men of letters—at once sociable, witty, and irresponsible, talking of their friends and of their literary projects, where he could forget for the hour the jealousies, the intrigues, and the ambitions of which the Cabinet of the Queen was the centre.

From this literary group, united not only by intellectual but by the closest personal sympathies, Harley disappeared with dramatic rapidity, and never rejoined it, though in his occasional visits to London he met some of his old friends. "The Dragon," wrote Arbuthnot to Swift in 1718, using the sobriquet which the Dean had given to Harley, because, as he said, "he was the mildest Minister that ever served a prince," "is just as he

[1] June 8th, 1714. Aitken's *Life of Arbuthnot*, p. 60.

was, only all his old habits ten times stronger upon him than ever."[1] Swift, too, departed from it when he finally returned to exile in Ireland, to be welcomed back only for a short time in 1727, and Pope and Gay and Arbuthnot in after years were left to represent the brilliant company which the political cataclysm of 1714 permanently dispersed. In September of that eventful year Parnell and Pope wrote to Arbuthnot a joint letter which is a farewell to the club: "It is a pleasure to us to recollect the satisfaction we enjoyed in your company, when we used to meet the Dean and Gay with you; and Greatness[2] itself condescended to look in at the door to us. Then it was the immortal Scriblerus smiled upon our endeavours, who now hangs his head in an obscure corner pining for his friends that are scattering over the face of the earth."[3] By Harley these gatherings were remembered with satisfaction long after those who formed them were dispersed by various destinies. "I look back indeed," he wrote to Pope in a dignified and friendly reply to the letter with which in 1721 was sent the famous dedication to Harley prefixed to the edition of Parnell's Poems, "I look back to those evenings I have usefully and pleasantly spent with Mr. Pope, Mr. Parnell, Dean Swift, the Doctor, etc."[4]

[1] Aitken's *Life of Arbuthnot*, p. 92.
[2] Harley.
[3] Aitken's *Arbuthnot*, p. 79.
[4] Pope's *Works*, viii. 189.

Not one of Harley's memories, as in his peaceful Herefordshire home he surveyed the critical and anxious years of his public life, can have been so agreeable as that of the hours which he passed in Arbuthnot's rooms in St. James' Palace, with the men of letters who are inseparably identified with the age of Anne, and among whom the harassed statesman for a short time could forget his political anxieties.

But neither the Brothers' nor the Scriblerus Club can be regarded as isolated groups, for Addison and Steele were the comrades of Wharton and Sunderland, as Pope, Swift, and Gay were of Harley and Bolingbroke. The club formed part of a unique society in which Harley was a conspicuous figure, and which was as remarkable for its sense of equality as for its ease and brilliancy. It retained some of the brightest characteristics of the Restoration, and it had not yet been overcome by the dulness of the Court of the four Georges. The easy sociability of the Lord Treasurer's weekly political dinners on Saturday afternoons was as agreeable as the more intimate causeries in Lady Masham's apartments, and the universal appreciation of letters broke down social barriers. When Swift was at Court, he tells Stella, one day in December (1711), as the Tories were rejoicing at Harley's unhoped-for victory over the Whigs, "the Duchess of Shrewsbury came running up to me,

and clapped her fan up to hide us from the company, and we gave one another joy of this change." In all that invaluable letter-diary of Swift's we have no more vivid and suggestive picture than this: the poor Irish parson—for that is what he was—and the Duchess with their heads together behind the fluttering fan, rejoicing over the defeat of their political enemies. Literature and politics, high society, personal ambition and personal enmity, are personified in a moment, in a corner of the Court, that Court which was the scene of the triumphs and of the downfall of Harley.

In concluding this review of the connection between Harley and his literary friends, it is scarcely needful to point out that the association of literature with politics, and so of men of letters with the Court, was not a mere accidental social phenomenon, but a noticeable phase in the history of English letters, a result of that enlargement of national life, and that growth of the modern spirit which showed itself so vividly both in politics and commerce during the first years of the eighteenth century, when, after passing through the two unexampled crises of the Rebellion and the Revolution, and after dominating the Grand Alliance against France in a war which raged from the Scheld to the Danube, the nation was ripe for the commencement of a new epoch of peaceable development. The widespread

interest which was felt from one end of England to the other in the politics of the hour, gave, when they discussed them, the largest scope to the ablest writers of the day, the quickest and surest rewards, the most extensive public applause. Men of letters were never before or since so closely concerned with public affairs, not in a special capacity, as must always happen from time to time, and as occurred in the secretaryship of Addison, but as users of the pen. The open connection in the age of Anne between statesmen and writers, whether Whigs or Tories, was an official and public recognition of the importance of their work and of its increasing effect on English opinion—a recognition which, as it became more general, became the appreciation of journalism as a great factor in national life, while the personalities of the men who did the work were lost in the force which their celebrated predecessors had created. This outburst of literary activity in the form which has now become so vast and so common, is the more striking since it was not only sudden in its advent, but was singularly brilliant. It produced publications which, though ephemeral in intention, have long outlived their authors, and were powerful without visible effort, and as effective in purpose as they were attractive in style, and have caused the work of Swift and Addison, of Steele and—though he was not of the Court group, and an assistant, not a friend,

of Harley — it must be added, of De Foe, to become English classics. The remarkable perception which Harley possessed of the trend of popular feeling, his natural love of books, his kindly temperament, and his position as chief of the Administration, caused him to become the central figure round which were gathered in varying degrees of relationship or intimacy the men of letters who were at work for the Tory party. In the interest which is felt in the personal aspect of these associations, one is inclined to overlook their importance as incidents in the growth of national life.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

SWIFT'S CHARACTER OF THE EARL OF OXFORD [1]

THE Earl of Oxford is a person of as much virtue as can possibly consist with the love of power; and his love of power is no greater than what is common to men of his superior capacities; neither did any man ever appear to value it less after he had obtained it, or exert it with more moderation. He is the only instance that ever fell within my memory or observation, of a person passing from a private life, through the several stages of greatness, without any perceivable impression upon his temper or behaviour. As his own birth was illustrious, being descended from the heirs general of the Veres and the Mortimers, so he seemed to value that accidental advantage in himself and others more than it could pretend to deserve. He abounded in good nature and good humour; although subject to passion, as I have heard it affirmed by others, and owned by himself; which, however, he kept under the strictest government, till toward the end of his ministry, when he began to grow soured, and to suspect his friends; and, perhaps, thought it not worth his pains to manage

[1] From an Inquiry into the Behaviour of the Queen's Last Ministry with relation to their quarrels among themselves and the design charged upon them of altering the succession to the Crown.—Swift's *Works*, v. 265.

any longer. He was a great favourer of men of wit and learning, particularly the former; whom he caressed without distinction of party, and could not endure to think that any of them should be his enemies; and it was his good fortune that none of them ever appeared to be so; at least if one may judge by the libels and pamphlets published against him, which he frequently read, by way of amusement, with a most unaffected indifference: neither do I remember ever to have endangered his good opinion so much as by appearing uneasy when the dealers in that kind of writing first began to pour out their scurrilities against me; which he thought was a weakness altogether inexcusable in a man of virtue and liberal education. He had the greatest variety of knowledge that I have anywhere met with; was a perfect master of the learned languages, and well skilled in divinity. He had a prodigious memory and a most exact judgment. In drawing up any state paper, no man had more proper thoughts, or put them in so strong and clear a light. Although his style were not always correct,—which, however, he knew how to mend,—yet often, to save time, he would leave the smaller alterations to others. I have heard that he spoke but seldom in Parliament, and then rather with art than eloquence: but no man equalled him in the knowledge of our constitution; the reputation whereof made him be chosen Speaker to three successive Parliaments; which office, I have often heard his enemies allow him to have executed with universal applause. His sagacity was such, that I could produce very amazing instances of it, if they were not unseasonable. In all difficulties, he immediately found the true point that was to be pursued, and adhered to it; and one or two others in the Ministry have confessed very often to me, that, after having condemned his opinion, they found him in the right and themselves in the wrong. He was utterly a stranger

to fear; and consequently had a presence of mind upon all emergencies. His liberality and contempt of money were such that he almost ruined his estate while he was in employment; yet his avarice for the public was so great that it neither consisted with the present corruptions of the age nor the circumstances of the time. He was seldom mistaken in his judgment of men, and therefore not apt to change a good or ill opinion by the representation of others, except toward the end of his Ministry. He was affable and courteous, extremely easy and agreeable in conversation, and altogether disengaged; regular in his life, with great appearance of piety; nor ever guilty of any expressions that could possibly tend to what was indecent or profane. His imperfections were at least as obvious, although not so numerous, as his virtues. He had an air of secrecy in his manner and countenance, by no means proper for a great Minister, because it warns all men to prepare against it. He often gave no answer at all, and very seldom a direct one: and I rather blame this reservedness of temper, because I have known a very different practice succeed much better; of which, among others, the late Earl of Sunderland, and the present Lord Somers, persons of great abilities, are remarkable instances; who used to talk in so frank a manner that they seemed to discover the bottom of their hearts, and by that appearance of confidence would easily unlock the breasts of others. But the Earl of Oxford pleads, in excuse of this charge, that he has seldom or never communicated anything which was of importance to be concealed, wherein he has not been deceived by the vanity, treachery, or indiscretion of those he discovered it to. Another of his imperfections, universally known and complained of, was procrastination or delay: which was, doubtless, natural to him, although he often bore the blame without the guilt, and when the remedy was not in his power; for never were prince and

Minister better matched than his sovereign and he upon that article; and therefore, in the disposal of employments, wherein the Queen was very absolute, a year would often pass before they could come to a determination. I remember he was likewise heavily charged with the common court vice, of promising very liberally and seldom performing; of which, although I cannot altogether acquit him, yet I am confident his intentions were generally better than his disappointed solicitors would believe. It may be likewise said of him that he certainly did not value, or did not understand, the art of acquiring friends; having made very few during the time of his power, and contracted a great number of enemies. Some of us used to observe, that those whom he talked well of, or suffered to be often near him, were not in a situation of much advantage; and that his mentioning others with contempt or dislike was no hindrance at all to their preferment. I have dwelt the longer upon this great man's character, because I have observed it so often mistaken by the wise reasoners of both parties; besides, having had the honour, for almost four years, of a nearer acquaintance with him than usually happens to men of my level, and this without the least mercenary obligation, I thought it lay in my power, as I am sure it is in my will, to represent him to the world with impartiality and truth.

APPENDIX II

MONEY LENT TO THE QUEEN BY THE EARL OF OXFORD

[1714, July.]—Two papers in Lord Oxford's handwriting, giving an "Account of money laid out of my own for the Queen at several times." The dates, between 1712

and July 1714, of the various advances are given, but not in chronological order, with the amount of each advance and the name of the person to whom it was paid. In two cases, however, some disguise is meant, for two sums of £100 and £200 respectively are entered as paid in March 1714 to "Kuthbert," written in Greek characters, and £100 is paid to "L. Orde," written in like characters, in April of that year.

Altogether Lord Oxford puts down a total of £4700 due to him; he adds, "But it is much more, as will appear by my memdms.; this is only what occurs (to me?)."

A third paper, evidently written many years after by the second Earl of Oxford, runs thus: "Tuesday, 27th July 1714.—R., Earl of Oxford, delivered up the Treasurer's staff to the Queen in her closet. Her Majesty was pleased to talk with him after his delivery of the staff above two hours, and among other matters told him she knew he had laid out several sums of money for her service and by her direction, that she expected he should come to her again, that she would not then give directions for the payment of the money, the doing of which she reserved till his next coming to her.

"The Queen fell ill the next day and died the Sunday following, so Lord Oxford had no opportunity of waiting again upon Her Majesty. Lord Oxford, in his lifetime, mentioned often to his brother and son that a considerable sum of money was due to him from the late Queen, but by reason of his troubles and his retirement in the country he did not make application for it. His son, the present Earl of Oxford, has found, among his father's papers, memoranda in the late Earl's own hand which specify that the late Queen owed him above £4700.

"It is, therefore, humbly hoped that out of the money applicable to the Queen's debts this sum may be paid." —*Harley Papers*, iii. 481.

APPENDIX III

NOTE ON THE MANUSCRIPTS AND LETTERS OF AND RELATING TO ROBERT HARLEY, EARL OF OXFORD

As is well known, and as has been already stated (p. 216), the bulk of the MSS. collected by Robert Harley and of his official papers were purchased by the Trustees of the British Museum. But a mass of papers of an official character were not disposed of by his daughter-in-law the Countess of Oxford, and these remain at Welbeck Abbey. Of the MSS. containing more especially correspondence—letters written to or by Robert Harley—there are now three main collections: (1) That of the Duke of Portland at Welbeck Abbey. Much of this has recently been published, and is contained in the *Harley Papers;* vol. i. with this sub-title is the same as vol. iii. of the Manuscripts of the Duke of Portland preserved at Welbeck Abbey (Historical Manuscripts Commission, 14th Report, Appendix, part ii.); the *Harley Papers*, vol. ii. = Portland MSS., vol. iv. (Hist. MSS. Com., 15th Rep. App. part iv.), the *Harley Papers*, vol. iii. = Portland MSS., vol. v. 1899 (the former official enumeration not being continued), and the *Harley Papers*, vol. iv. = Portland MSS., vol. vi. 1901. All these papers came into the possession of the Duke of Portland when Edward Harley, second Earl of Oxford, married Henrietta Cavendish, only daughter and heiress of John, first Duke of Newcastle, the owner of Welbeck Abbey. Their only daughter, Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley—the "noble, lovely little Peggy" of Prior's charming lines—married in 1734 William, second Duke of Portland, to whom she conveyed the estate of Welbeck, and the Harley correspondence passed also to her husband. (2) The collection

of Mr. R. W. D. Harley of Brampton Bryan, Herefordshire. Edward, third Earl of Oxford, who succeeded to the title and estates in 1741, was Robert Harley's nephew, being the son of Edward Harley, Auditor of the Exchequer, of Eyewood, Herefordshire. This collection consists chiefly of family letters written by Robert Harley to his relatives. (3) The collection of the Marquis of Bath at Longleat, Wilts. Thomas, first Marquis of Bath, married in 1759 Lady Elizabeth Cavendish Bentinck, eldest daughter of William, second Duke of Portland; and by some means a box of Harley's papers came after this marriage into the possession of the Marquis of Bath. Interesting extracts from these papers have been published in Aitken's *Life of Arbuthnot*, but a selection from the correspondence will shortly be published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission. Isolated letters written by or relating to Harley, as well as statements in regard to him, are also to be found among the MSS. in the British Museum, in various collections which it is unnecessary to enumerate, in the Reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, and in published diaries and other works well known to the student of the age of Anne.

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